

THE *Publ. 1784*
EPIGONIAD.

A
P O E M.

IN NINE BOOKS.

By WILLIAM WILKIE, V.D.M.

THE SECOND EDITION,
Carefully Corrected and Improved.

To which is Added,

A D R E A M.

In the Manner of SPENSER.

Nam veluti pueris absinthia tetra medentes
Cum dare conantur, prius oras pocula circum
Contingunt mellis dulci, flavoque liquore,
Ut puerorum ætas improvida ludificetur
Labrorum tenuis, interea perpotet amarum
Absinthii laticem, deceptaque non capitur;
Sed potius tali facto recreata vale scat.
Sic ego ———

LUCRET. lib. iv.

L O N D O N :

Printed for J. MURRAY, No. 32. Fleet-Street.
And WILSON and NICOL in the Strand.

M.DCC.LXIX.

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(Corrected and improved.)



A M A

In the Museum of St. James's.

Non veluti fueris absinthia totas meliores
Cum dare conantur, pueri ovis pecula circum
Contingunt mellis dulci, thymopae liquor,
Ut puerorum totas improbitas iudicet
Ladonem totas, interea perperet amantem
Adhuc iudicem, deceptique non exantem,
Sed potius aliis seque videret valedat.
Lucr. lib. iv. Sic ego —

LONDON:

Printed for J. Murray, No. 32. Fleet Street.
And Wilson and Nicoll in the Strand.

M.DCC.LXIX.

P R E F A C E.

AS there is no class of writers more freely censured than Poets, and that by judges of all sorts, competent and incompetent : I shall attempt to answer some objections that may be made to the following performance, by persons not sufficiently acquainted with Epic poetry, and the rules upon which it ought to be formed.

THE beauties of the piece, if it has any, shall be left to be discovered by the reader for himself. This is his undoubted privilege ; and I have no intention to break in upon it : neither would it be of any advantage to do so ; for poetical beauties, if they are real, will make themselves observed, and have their full effect without a comment.

SOME will object to the choice of the subject, That it is taken from the history of an age and nation, the particular manners of which are not now well known, and there-

fore incapable of being justly represented by any modern author. This objection will appear to be of little consequence, when we consider that the fact upon which it proceeds is so far from being strictly true, that there are none who have any tolerable share of classical learning, that are not better acquainted with the manners and customs of the heroic ages, than with those of their own country, at the distance of a few centuries. Neither is this knowledge of antient manners confined to the learned; the vulgar themselves, from the books of Moses, and other accounts of the first periods of the Jewish state, are sufficiently instructed in the customs of the earliest times, to be able to relish any work where these are justly represented. With what favor, for instance, has Mr. Pope's translation of the *Iliad* been received by persons of all conditions? and how much is it commonly preferred to the *Fairy Queen*, a poem formed upon manners of a much more modern cast. But, supposing the fact upon which the objection proceeds to be true, and that the customs and manners peculiar to the times from which

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the subject of the poem is taken, are not now well understood, I do not apprehend, that, even with this concession, the objection amounts to any thing considerable; for manners are to be distinguished into two kinds, universal and particular. Universal manners, are those which arise from the original frame and constitution of the human nature, and which consequently are the same in all nations and periods of the world. Particular manners, on the other hand, consist of such customs and modes of behaviour, as proceed from the influence of partial causes, and that shift and vary as those causes do upon which they depend. To make myself understood by an example; it is agreeable to common or universal manners, to be angry and resent an injury; but particular manners, in ordinary cases, determine the methods of revenge. For great offences, an Italian poisons his enemy; a Spaniard stabs him over the shoulder; and a Frenchman seeks satisfaction in a duel. From this example, it will be easy to see that particular manners ought to appear but very little, either in Epic poetry, Tragedy, or any other of the higher kinds of poetical compo-

lition.

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sition; for they are vulgar, and depend upon custom: but great passions and high characters reject ordinary forms; and therefore must, upon every occasion, break thro' all the common modes both of speech and behaviour. Tho' antient manners, therefore, were not so precisely known as they are, I should imagine, that a story taken from the accounts which we have of the heroic ages, might very well serve for the subject of an Epic poem, and have all the advantages necessary in respect of that species of composition.

It may likewise be alledged, That I have done wrong in choosing for my subject a piece of history which has no connection with present affairs; and that, if I had done otherwise, my work would have been more interesting and useful.

This objection, seemingly a very material one, admits, notwithstanding, of an easy answer, viz. that subjects for Epic poetry ought always to be taken from periods too early to fall within the reach of true history. And, if this rule is shewn to be essential, which I shall attempt to do in what follows, it will be found

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found, to be impossible that any subject proper for that kind of writing should have a connection with present affairs. The proper business of Epic poetry is to extend our ideas of human perfection, or, as the critics express it, to excite admiration. In order to do this in any tolerable degree, characters must be magnified, and accommodated, rather to our notions of heroic greatness, than to the real state of human nature. There appears a certain littleness in all men when truly known, which checks admiration, and confines it to very narrow limits; heroes, themselves, tho' possessed of the greatest qualities, are, in most circumstances of their condition, so much upon a level with the ordinary run of mankind, that such as have an opportunity of being intimately acquainted with them, do not admire them at the same rate that others do, who view them only at a distance. The common conditions of humanity lessen every man; and there are many little circumstances inseparably connected with our state of being, which we cannot easily reconcile with our idea of Epaminondas, Plato, Scipio, or Cæsar. From all this

it plainly appears, that admiration claims for its object something superior to mere humanity; and therefore such poems as have it for their end to excite admiration, ought to celebrate those persons only that never have been treated of by regular historians. For history gives to all things their just and natural dimensions; and, if it should interfere with poetical fiction, would effectually confute those beautiful legends which are invented to raise our ideas of character and action, above the standard at which experience has fixed them.

LET it be observed, as a further confirmation of the maxim which I am establishing, that there is in our minds a principle which leads us to admire past times, especially those which are most remote from our own. This prejudice is strong in us; and, without being directed or assisted by art, forms in the mere vulgar of all countries, the most extravagant notions of the stature, strength, and other heroic qualities of their remote ancestors. This prejudice, so favourable to poetical fiction, true history effectually destroys; and therefore Poets, that they may have the advantage

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vantage of it, ought to celebrate those persons and events only that are of so great antiquity, as not to be remembered with any degree of certainty and exactness.

BUT, instead of a thousand arguments to this purpose, let us only consider the machinery which must be employed in an Epic poem: how heaven and hell must both be put in motion, and brought into the action; how events altogether out of the common road of human affairs, and no ways countenanced either by reason or by experience, must be offered to men's imaginations, so as to be admitted for true. Let us consider all this, and it will appear, that there is nothing which Poets ought more carefully to avoid, than interfering with such regular and well vouched accounts of things as would effectually confute their fable, and make the meanest reader reject it with contempt. This is a point of prudence which no poet has yet neglected with impunity. Lucan, according to his usual rashness, has taken, for the subject of an Epic poem, one of the best known events which he could have pitched upon in the whole series of human affairs;

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and, in order to distinguish himself from a mere historian, is often under a necessity of starting from his subject, and employing the whole force of a very lively and fruitful invention in unnecessary descriptions and trifling digressions. This, besides other inconveniencies of greater importance, gives such an appearance of labor and straining to his whole performance, as takes much from the merit of it, with all who have any notion of ease, majesty, and simplicity in writing. He, and all other poets who have fallen into the same error, find always this disadvantage attending it, that the true and fictitious parts of their work refuse to unite, and standing as it were at a distance, upon terms of mutual aversion, reproach each other with their peculiar defects. Fiction accuses truth of narrowness and want of dignity; and this again represents the other as vain and extravagant. Spencer, who, in his *Fairy Queen*, not only treats of matters within the sphere of regular history, but describes even the transactions of his own time, in order to avoid the inconveniencies which he knew to be almost inseparable from such an attempt, covers his
story

story with a veil of allegory, that few of his readers are able to penetrate. This stratagem leaves him at full liberty in the exercise of his invention; but he pays, in my opinion, too dear for that privilege, by sacrificing to it all the weight and authority which a mixture of received tradition and real geography would have given to his fable. Milton takes the subjects of both his great poems from true history, yet does not succeed the worse upon that account. But it is to be remembered, that his chief actors are not men, but divine and angelical beings; and that it is the human nature only which suffers by a just representation, and loses in point of dignity, when truly known. Besides, the historical circumstances upon which he builds are so few, and of so extraordinary a nature, that they are easily accommodated to poetical fiction; and therefore, instead of limiting him, and setting bounds to his invention, they serve only to countenance and give a degree of credibility to whatever he pleases to feign. Shakespear may likewise be quoted as an exception to the general rule, who takes the subjects of many of his pieces from periods

of the English history not very remote, and, notwithstanding, succeeds remarkably in exciting the heroic passion. That Shakespear makes us admire his heroes is undeniable; and no man of common sense will ever pretend to assert, that real characters of great men, touched up and heightened by a poetical fancy, will not very naturally excite admiration. But there are different degrees of this passion, as well as of all others: and it is evident, that the degree of it which Shakespear intends to raise, is not equal to that which Homer aims at, and the other writers of the Epic tribe. We admire no character in Shakespear's works more than that of Henry V. but the idea which Homer gives us of Achilles is still more noble and august. The Tragedian mixes so much of the ordinary man in the character of his hero, that we become too familiar with him to admire him in a high degree: for in those very pieces in which he is represented as performing his most remarkable exploits, he is often found at his leisure hours amusing himself with a knot of humorists, pickpockets, and buffoons. I do not pretend to censure Shakespear

fpear for this conduct; because it is not the
 business of a Tragedian to make us admire,
 but to interest our other affections: and, to
 make his heroes very much objects of ad-
 miration, would possibly be one of the great-
 est errors than an author of that kind could
 fall into: for the principle of compassion, to
 which Tragedy is peculiarly addressed, is in-
 compatible with high admiration; and a man,
 in order either to be loved or pitied, must
 appear with evident symptoms of the weak-
 nesses common to the rest of the human kind.
 It is our own image in distress which afflicts
 us; and we never pity one under calamities,
 who is not weak enough to be moved by
 them. Homer, upon this account, never at-
 tempts to excite pity, but from such private
 and domestic distresses as shew his heroes in
 the light of ordinary men. Sophocles like-
 wise, from a just apprehension that the he-
 roic passion interferes with the proper spirit
 of Tragedy, lessens on purpose the great
 characters which he introduces, and strips
 them of more than half their dignity. Tho'
 therefore Shakespear makes us admire his
 heroes as much as a Tragedian ought to do,
 and

and even more, in some instances, than the rules of art would justify; yet, as the degree of admiration which he excites is less by far than that which Epic poetry aims at, it may well be raised from subjects that are strictly historical, tho' the higher degrees of that passion cannot. Were my judgment of sufficient authority in matters of criticism, I would have it understood as a rule, That the subjects of Epic poetry should be taken from tradition only: that Tragedy should keep within the limits of true history; and that Comedy, without meddling at all with historical facts, should expose vice and folly in recent instances, and from living examples. That part of the rule which regards Epic poetry, is sufficiently justified from what has been already said; and, concerning Tragedy, I have likewise observed, that it ought not to exalt its greatest characters above the standard of real life. From this it will follow, that it may be strictly historical without losing any real advantage, and attain its full perfection without the assistance of fable. I believe it will be easily allowed, that where truth and fiction are equally subservient

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servient to the purposes of poetry, the first
 ought always to be preferred; for true his-
 tory carries a weight and authority with it,
 which seldom attend stories that are merely
 fictitious, and has many other advantages
 for interesting our affections above the
 legends of remote antiquity. But as Tra-
 gedy should never go so far back as the fa-
 bulous ages, neither should it, in my opi-
 nion, approach too near to present times;
 for, tho' it does not aim at raising and gra-
 tifying the passion of admiration, yet it has
 a degree of dignity to maintain, which it
 would endanger by treating of events too
 recent, and characters too particularly re-
 membered. Comedy, on the other hand,
 and indeed every species of satire whatso-
 ever, ought to attack living characters only,
 and the vices and follies of present times.
 That imperfection which appears in every
 thing when viewed near, a circumstance so
 unfavorable to the genius of Epic poetry
 and Tragedy, falls in precisely with that of
 Comedy, a kind of writing which has no
 dignity to support, points always at what is
 ridiculous, and marks its objects with cha-
racters

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acters of littleness and contempt. We naturally admire past times, and reverence the dead; and consequently are not so much disposed to laugh at fools, who have already finished their parts, and retired, as at fools who are yet upon the stage. The antient Comedy of the Greeks, which proceeded upon this maxim, was certainly, upon that account, the most perfect species of satire that ever was invented. Homer, as he exceeds all other poets in merit, has likewise the advantage of them in point of good fortune; the condition of the age in which he wrote gave him an opportunity of celebrating, in his poems, events, which tho' they were in his days of no great antiquity, and consequently the more interesting, yet had fallen, thro' the want of authentic records, into so happy a degree of obscurity, that he was at full liberty to feign concerning them what he pleased, without any danger of confutation. This is an advantage which succeeding poets could not boast of; and therefore have found themselves under a necessity, either of taking their subjects from remote antiquity, as I have done, or

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(which, in my opinion, is worse) of attempting to mix fable with true history, which never can be done with success.

THE mythology in the following poem will probably give offence to some readers, who will think it indecent for a Christian to write in such a manner as to suppose the truth of a Heathen religion. They will be of opinion, that it would have been better, either to have introduced no religious system at all, or to have chosen such a subject as would have admitted of the true system. I shall endeavour to answer this objection, by establishing two maxims directly opposite to what is proposed in the preceding alternative, and shew not only that divine beings are necessary characters in an Epic poem, but likewise that it is highly improper to introduce the true God into a work of that nature. If these two points are fully made out, the force of the objection will be taken away. As to the first of them, let us again consider the end which Epic poetry proposes to itself: it aims at exciting admiration, by setting before us images of whatever is great and noble in the human character: it is necessary

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cessary for this purpose that a poet should give his heroes, not only all those intrinsic qualities which make men admired, but that he should magnify them likewise by a skilful management of outward circumstances. We do not form our notions either of persons or things from their real qualities only; circumstances of a foreign nature, and merely accessory, have as great an influence as these in determining our approbation and dislike. This observation shews the importance of mythology to Epic poetry; for nothing can render a person of greater consequence in the eye of the world, than an opinion that the gods regard him with a peculiar degree of attention, and are much interested in all that relates to him. If people are once considered as the favorites of heaven, or instruments chosen for the accomplishment of its important purposes; poets may tell of them what great things they please, without seeming to exaggerate, or say any thing that exceeds the bounds of probability. Homer was certainly of this opinion, when he ascribed, to his heroes, valor and other
great

great qualities in so immoderate a degree : for, had the gods never interposed in any of the events which he celebrates ; had his chief actors been no ways connected with them, either in point of favor or consanguinity, and represented, at the same time, as performing the high exploits which he ascribes to them, instead of being applauded as the first of poets, he would have been censured as the most false and most credulous of historians. This argument in favor of poetical mythology, with another which might be taken from the advantage it is of in point of ornament, and a third from its use in allegory, has determined almost all the writers who have followed the Epic or heroic style, to allow it a place in their compositions : such of them as have taken their subject from Greek or Roman story, have adopted the mythology of Homer ; and the rest, in celebrating more modern heroes, have, instead of that, made use of the true religion, corrupted by an unnatural mixture of northern superstition and Grecian fable. From a practice therefore so universal, we may justly infer, that

poets

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poets have looked upon mythology as a thing of great use in their compositions, and almost essential to the art.

It may be alledged, after all that has been said, That, to bring gods into Epic poetry, is inconvenient on many accounts; that it prevents a proper display of character in the human actors, turning them all into so many machines, to be moved and guided by the immediate impulses of Deity: that it breaks in upon the order of natural causes, and renders all art, either in the plan or conduct of a work, superfluous and unnecessary. If what this objection supposes were true, and that the mixing of gods with men in the action of an Epic poem, necessarily turned the whole into miracle; if it were an unavoidable consequence of this method, that the human actors should be governed in all they do by divine impulse determining them, without regard to their natural characters, and the probable motives which ought to influence them: in short, if mythology could have no place in a poem, but at the expence of manners, order, connection, and every other thing that

that can render a work either beautiful or instructive, it would be an argument against it of such weight, as nothing alledged in its favor would be able to counterbalance. But the objection is by no means well founded; for, tho' there may be an indiscreet application of mythology, productive of all those ill effects which have been mentioned; yet it is obvious, both from reason and experience, that mythology may be managed in such a manner as to be attended with none of them. And this will appear from a very obvious example: The greatest part of mankind, in every age, have believed that gods and superior beings govern and direct the course of human affairs. Many individuals, and even whole nations, have thought that all the actions and events of our lives are predetermined by an overruling power, and that we suffer the control of an irresistible necessity in all we do: yet this opinion never changes the moral feelings of such as entertain it, and their judgment of characters and actions; they love and hate, approve and disapprove, admire and despise, in the same manner as others

others do who believe that men are absolutely free, and that their final determinations proceed only from themselves. But when it is understood, that people act without consciousness, or that the organs of their bodies are not under the dominion of their own wills, but actuated by some other being without their consent; in short, when mere physical necessity is substituted in place of moral, all idea of character, all sense of approbation and disapprobation immediately ceases. From this fact, the truth of which no body will dispute, it is easy to judge in what cases the interposition of gods in the action of a poem will prevent a proper display of the human characters, and when not. Volition, as appears by the example now given, is that upon which all our moral ideas are founded: so long then as volition is exerted, there is a character, and, when that ceases, the character is lost. If therefore the deities in a poem are employed in animating and deterring the heroes, only by suggesting such motives as are proper to influence their wills; such interposition by no means interferes with the display of cha-

character, but rather favors it; for the quality of every mind may be known from the motives by which it is determined; and Minerva's prevailing with Pandarus to be guilty of a piece of treachery, by suggesting that Paris would reward him for it, discovered the venality of his temper as much as if he had done the same action from a like motive occurring to himself.

POETS often make the gods infuse an uncommon degree of vigor into their heroes, for answering some great occasion, and add to the grace and dignity of their figure. Sometimes they make a second rate hero the first in a particular action, and, with their assistance, he distinguishes himself above such as are at other times more remarkable for valor and success: all this is so agreeable to what happens naturally, and from mere mechanical causes, that we forget the gods, and interpret what happens as if they had not interposed at all. For every body knows, that when people are roused to any remarkable exertion of force, they become stronger than they are at other times; and that, when in this manner the
spirits

spirits rise to an uncommon height, the whole body acquires new graces. Valor is not a fixed and permanent quality, nor is it found in any one always in the same degree. Plutarch observes, that of all the virtues it exerts itself most irregularly, and rises by fits like a divine inspiration. The sense which every man has of these things, makes him look upon the interposition of gods in such cases as a mythological way of expressing what is merely natural, and allow such as perform the great actions in a poem to possess the whole merit of them. It never lessens our opinion of Hector's valor, for instance, that Apollo often assists him; nor do we think Ulysses less prudent, because he is guided by the influence of Minerva. We have as clear impressions of those, and the other Homeric characters, as we have of any characters whatsoever, and discern their limits and distinguishing marks as clearly, as if they had acted altogether of themselves. That superior beings should be employed in governing the events of things, and interposing by thunder, earthquakes, inundations, pestilences, and the like,

like, can never be thought unnatural in poetry, by any one who believes that Providence actually manages the affairs of the world by such means. It belongs to men to design and act, but to Heaven alone to determine events. Tho' a poet, therefore, should represent an army weaker and worse conducted, prevailing, in consequence of that kind of interposition which has been mentioned, over another, evidently better and stronger; there would be nothing unnatural in such an account, or contrary to what is often experienced in real affairs.

AFTER all that has been said, it must be owned, that if gods are brought in upon slight occasions, and for trifling purposes; if they are put upon working miracles in order to cover blunders, either in the plan or execution of a poem, and employed in cutting such knots as the author himself has not the skill or patience to untie; it must be owned, I say, that this is a very wrong application of mythology, and attended with all the disadvantages

which the objection mentions. It is a stratagem, which, if often practised, would teach the reader at last to disregard all appearances, and, when the most important periods of affairs were approaching, to remain quite secure and uninterested, trusting that a god would always be at hand in time of need to manage every thing as the poet would have it, and put all to rights by the shortest and most effectual methods. I have considered this objection at greater length, because at first view it appears very plausible; and shall proceed to what remains, after I have taken notice of another, which has likewise some appearance of force. It will be thought inconvenient, as it is the design of Epic poetry to raise and dignify human characters, that gods should appear with men in the same scenes of action. It will be alledged, that in this case the divine persons will necessarily overshadow the human, lessen them by a comparison, and consequently produce an effect directly opposite to what is intended. This objection, however

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ever plausible, does not seem to be supported by experience ; at least I never found in any instance, that the splendor of the divine characters in a poem eclipsed the human. Besides, this is what cannot easily happen ; for, let us suppose two parties of boys engaged in some trial, either of force or skill, and that a few men take part in the debate, dividing themselves between the opposite sides, and assisting them against each other, would the exploits of the full-grown men, however remarkable, lessen those of the boys ? by no means ; for things that are confessedly unequal, never come into competition, and therefore cannot be either lessened or magnified by appearing together. Are we less disposed to admire the valor of Achilles, because it is understood he was not a match for Jupiter ? or the sagacity of Ulysses, because his penetration was not equal to that of Minerva ? But there is one circumstance which renders it absolutely impossible for the gods in Epic poetry to eclipse the men in point of heroism ; and it is this, That

the gods are immortal, and consequently cannot exert that in which heroism chiefly consists, *viz.* the contempt of death. Homer, in order to give his deities as much of that quality as possible, has made them vulnerable and susceptible of pain; a freedom which has shocked some of the critics, who did not attend to the reason of his doing so. But Homer was too good a judge of propriety, not to be sensible that no person could appear with advantage in military actions who ventured nothing in point of personal safety; and that stature, force, magnificent armor, and even the highest achievements, will never constitute the heroic character, where patience and a contempt of danger have no opportunity of appearing. It is this circumstance which gives the mortals in Epic poetry a manifest advantage over the immortals; and Mars, when ushered into the field with all the pomp and magnificence of Homeric description, is an object less to be admired than Diomed, Ajax, and many others, who combat bravely, tho' conscious

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of mortality. Homer, who has managed his great characters with the truest judgment and strictest attention to circumstances, takes care to have Achilles early informed that he was to perish at Troy, else he might seem too conscious of safety, from his matchless valor and the armor which he wore, to be great in that which is most to be admired, the contempt of death, when the danger of it is imminent. It must be acknowledged, that in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, the persons in the machinery overshadow the human characters, and that the heroes of the poem are all of them immortals: but then it is to be remembered, that *Paradise Lost* is a work altogether irregular; that the subject of it is not Epic, but Tragic; and that Adam and Eve are not designed to be objects of admiration, but of pity: it is Tragic in its plot, and Epic in its dress and machinery: as a Tragedy, it does not fall under the present question; and as an Epic poem, it evades it likewise, by a circumstance very uncommon, viz. that in the part of it which is

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properly Epic, there are no human persons at all.

I HAVE in this manner endeavoured to prove that mythology is necessary to an Epic poem, and that the chief objections to the use of it are of little consequence. I proceed to establish the other proposition which I mentioned, and shew, that the true God ought not to be brought into a work of that nature. And if this proposition can be made out, it will easily appear from it and the preceding one taken together, that Poets are under a necessity of having recourse to a false theology, and that they are not to be blamed for doing what the nature of Epic poetry on the one hand, and respect to the true religion on the other, render necessary and unavoidable. For proving the point in question, I need only observe, that no person can appear with advantage in poetry, who is not represented according to the form and condition of a man. This art addresses itself chiefly to the imagination, a faculty which apprehends nothing in the way of character
that

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that is not human, and according to the analogy of that nature of which we ourselves are conscious. But it would be equally impious and absurd to represent the Deity in this manner, and to contrive for him a particular character, and method of acting, agreeable to the prejudices of weak and ignorant mortals. In the early ages of the church, he thought fit to accommodate himself, by such a piece of condescension, to the notions and apprehensions of his creatures: but it would be indecent in any man to use the same freedom, and do that for God, which he only has a right to do for himself. The author of *Paradise Lost* has offended notoriously in this respect; and, tho' no encomiums are too great for him as a poet, he is justly chargeable with impiety, for presuming to represent the Divine Nature, and the mysteries of religion, according to the narrowness of human prejudice: his dialogues between the Father and the Son; his employing a Being of infinite wisdom in discussing the subtleties of school divinity;

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the sensual views which he gives of the happiness of heaven, admitting into it, as a part, not only real eating and drinking, but another kind of animal pleasure too by no means more refined: these, and such like circumstances, tho' perfectly poetical, and agreeable to the genius of an art which adapts every thing to the human model, are, at the same time, so inconsistent with truth, and the exalted ideas which we ought to entertain of divine things, that they must be highly offensive to all such as have just impressions of religion, and would not choose to see a system of doctrine revealed from heaven, reduced to a state of conformity with Heathen superstition. True theology ought not to be used in an Epic poem, for another reason, of no less weight than that which has been mentioned, *viz.* That the human characters which it represents should never be formed upon a perfect moral plan, but have their piety, (for instance) tinged with superstition, and their general behavior influenced by affection, passion, and prejudice. This will
be

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be thought a violent paradox, by such as do not know that imperfect characters interest us more than perfect ones, and that we are doubly instructed when we see, in one and the same example, both what we ought to follow, and what we ought to avoid. Accordingly Horace, in his Epistle to Lollius, where he bestows the highest encomiums upon the *Iliad*, as a work which delineated vice and virtue better than the writings of the most celebrated philosophers, says of it, notwithstanding, That it is taken up in describing the animosities of foolish kings and infatuated nations. To go to the bottom of this matter, it will be proper to observe, that men are capable of two sorts of character, which may be distinguished by the names of natural and artificial. The natural character implies all those feelings, passions, desires, and opinions which men have from nature and common experience, independent of speculation and moral refinement. A person of this character looks upon outward prosperity as a real good, and considers the calamities

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mities of life as real evils; loves his friends, hates his enemies, admires his superiors, is assuming with respect to his inferiors, and stands upon terms of rivalry with his equals; in short, is governed by all those passions and opinions that possess the hearts and determine the actions of ordinary men. The force and magnitude of this character is in proportion to the strength of these natural dispositions; and its virtue consists in having the generous and beneficent ones predominant. As to that sort of character, again, which I distinguished by the name of artificial; it consists in a habit of mind formed by discipline, according to the cool and dispassionate dictates of reason. This character is highly moral, but, in my opinion, far less poetical than the other, by being less fit for interesting our affections, which are formed by the wise Author of our nature for embracing such beings as are of the same temper and complexion with ourselves, and are marked with the common infirmities of human nature. Persons of the high philosophic character, are too firm
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and unmoved, amidst the calamities they meet with, to excite much sympathy, and are too much superior to the fallies of passion and partial affection, the popular marks of generosity and greatness of mind, ever to be much admired by the bulk of mankind. If the most accomplished poet in the world should take a rigid philosopher for the chief character either of an Epic poem or a Tragedy, it is easy to conjecture what would be the success of such an attempt; the work would assume the character of its hero, and be cold, dispassionate, and uninteresting. There is, however, a species of panegyric proper for such sort of perfection, and it may be represented to advantage, either in history or prose dialogue, but it will never strike the bulk of mankind. Plato, in his apology of Socrates, deceives us; as Mr. Addison likewise does in his Tragedy of Cato: for both of them attempt to persuade us, that we are affected with the contemplation of unshaken fortitude, while we are only sympathizing with suffering innocence. The tenderness of

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humanity appearing thro' the hardness of the philosophic character, is that which affects us in both instances, and not that unconquered greatness of mind, which occasions rather wonder and astonishment than genuine affection.

FROM what has been said, it is easy to infer, that the great characters, both in Epic poetry and Tragedy, ought not to be formed upon a perfect moral plan; and therefore heroes themselves must often be represented as acting from such motives, and governed by such affections as impartial reason cannot approve of: but it would be highly indecent to make a being, whom religion teaches us to consider as perfect, enter into the views of such persons, and exert himself in order to promote their extravagant enterprizes. This would be to bring down the infinite wisdom of God to the level of human folly, and to make him altogether such an one as ourselves.

A FALSE theology, therefore, ought rather to be employed in poetical compositions
than

than the true; for, as the superior beings which are introduced must of necessity be represented as assuming the passions and opinions of those whom they favor, it is surely much safer to employ a set of imaginary beings for this purpose, than God himself, and the blessed angels, who ought always to be objects of our reverence.

THE same reasoning which leads to this conclusion, will likewise make us sensible, that among false religions, those ought to be preferred which are least connected with the true; for the superstitions which priests and poets have built upon the Christian faith, dishonor it, and therefore should, if possible, be buried in oblivion. The antient Greek theology seems upon all accounts the fittest. It has no connection with the true system, and therefore may be treated with the greatest freedom, without indecency or ground of offence. It consists of a number of beautiful fables, suited to the taste of the most lively and ingenious people that ever existed, and so much calculated to ravish and transport a
warm

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warm imagination, that many poets in modern times, who proceeded upon a different theology, have notwithstanding been so bewitched with its charms, as to admit it into their works, tho' it clashed violently with the system which they had adopted. Milton is remarkable in this respect; and the more so, as his poem is altogether of a religious nature, and the subject of it taken from Holy Writ.

SOME may possibly imagine, that the following work would have had greater merit, if it had offered to the world a set of characters entirely new, and a story no ways connected with any thing that is already known. I am not of this opinion, but persuaded, on the contrary, that, to invent a story quite new, with a catalogue of names never before heard of, would be an attempt of such a nature, as could not be made with tolerable success; for every man must be sensible, that the wonders which Epic poetry relates, will shock even the ignorant vulgar, and appear altogether ridiculous, if they are not founded upon
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something which has already gained a degree of credit. Our first ideas are taken from experience; and, tho' we may be brought to receive notions, not only very different from those which experience suggests, but even directly contrary to them, yet this is not to be done suddenly and at one attempt: such, therefore, as would have their fictions favorably received, must lay it down as a rule, to accommodate what they feign to established prejudices, and build upon stories which are already in some measure believed. With this precaution, they may go great lengths without appearing absurd, but will soon shock the meanest understandings, if they neglect it. Had there been no fabulous accounts concerning the Trojan expedition current in Greece and Asia, at the time when Homer wrote, the stories which he tells, tho' the most beautiful that ever were invented, would have appeared to his co-temporaries altogether ridiculous, and never been admired, till antiquity had procured them credit, or a tradition been formed afterwards

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wards to vouch for them to the world; for, in matters of an extraordinary kind, not only reason, but even imagination, requires more than a single testimony to ground its assent upon; and therefore, tho' I should have invented a set of characters intirely new, and framed a story for the subject of my poem no ways connected with any thing that has yet been heard of, and been so happy in this attempt as to produce what might equal, in point of perfection, any of the most beautiful fables of antiquity; it would have wanted, notwithstanding, what is absolutely necessary in order to success, *viz.* that credit which new invented fictions derive from their connexion with such as are already become familiar to men's imaginations.

TRADITION is the best ground upon which fable can be built, not only because it gives the appearance of reality to things that are merely fictitious, but likewise because it supplies a poet with the most proper materials for his invention to work upon. There are some fabulous stories that

that please more universally than others; and of this kind are the wonders which tradition reports; for they are accommodated to the affections and passions of the bulk of mankind, in the same manner as national proverbs are to their understandings. The strict accommodation in both instances proceeds from the same cause, *viz.* that nothing of either sort is the work of one man, or of one age, but of many. Traditions are not perfected by their first inventors, nor proverbs established upon a single authority. Proverbs derive their credit from the general consent of mankind; and tradition is gradually corrected and improved in the hands of such as transmit it to each other thro' a succession of ages. In its first periods, it is a narrow thing, but extends itself afterwards, and, with the advantage of time and experiments often repeated, adapts itself so precisely to the affections, passions, and prejudices, natural to the human species, that it becomes at last perfectly agreeable to the sentiments of every heart. No one man, therefore,
can

can pretend to invent fables that will please so universally, as those which are formed by the progress of popular tradition. The faculties of any individual must be too narrow for that purpose, and have too much of a peculiar cast to be capable of producing what will be so strictly adapted to the common feelings and sentiments of all. It is this sort of perfection which pleases us in archæology, or the traditional accounts which we have of the origins of nations; for we are often more agreeably entertained with stories of that kind, tho' we know them to be absolutely false, than with the justest representations of real events. But as tradition, while it continues in the hands of the people, must be but rude and disagreeable in respect of its form, and have many things low and absurd in it, necessary to be palliated or suppressed, it does not arrive at that perfection of which it is capable, till it comes under the management of the poets, and from them receives its last improvement. By means of this progress, tales that, in the

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the mouths of their first inventors, were the most absurd that can be imagined, the effects of mere superstition, ignorance, and national prejudice, rise up at last to astonish the world, and draw the admiration of all ages, in the form of an *Iliad* or *Odyssey*. It is not the business of a poet, then, to make fable, but to form, correct, and improve tradition: and it is to his following this method, that Homer undoubtedly owes his success; for it is obvious to any one who considers his works with attention, that he only collected the various traditions that were current in his days, and reduced them to a system. That infinite variety of independent stories which occur in his works, is a proof of this: these are told with so minute, and often so unnecessary a detail of circumstances, that it is easy to see that he followed accounts already current, and did not invent what he has recorded. I could as easily believe that Prometheus made a man of clay, and put life into him, or assent to any other of the most absurd fictions of antiquity; I could even as soon be

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persuaded that all that Homer has written is strict matter of fact, as believe that any one mortal man was capable of inventing that infinite variety of historical circumstances which occur in the works of that celebrated poet: for invention is by no means an easy thing; and to contrive a tale that will please universally is certainly one of the most difficult undertakings that can be imagined. Poets, therefore, have found themselves under a necessity of trusting to something more powerful than their own invention in this important article, *viz.* the joint endeavours of many, regulated and directed by the censure of ages.

WHAT has been said, is not only sufficient to justify me in forming my poem upon historical circumstances already known, and introducing characters which the reader is before acquainted with; but shews the necessity likewise of taking many of the historical circumstances from the antient poets. For tradition, the proper foundation of Epic poetry, is now to be found only in their writings; and therefore must be

be used like a common stock, and not considered as the property of individuals.

For the immoderate length of the two Episodes, *viz.* those in the fourth and seventh books, all that I can say, is, that they are both brought in for very important purposes, and therefore may be permitted to take up more room than is ordinarily allowed to things of that sort. Besides, the first of them is intended as an experiment in that kind of fiction which distinguishes Homer's *Odyssey*, and the other as an attempt to heroic Tragedy, after the manner of Sophocles.

THE language is simple and artless. This I take to be an advantage, rather than a defect; for it gives an air of antiquity to the work, and makes the style more suitable to the subject.

My learned readers will be surprised to find Agamemnon and Menelaus at the siege of Thebes, when, according to Homer, they were not there: and, at the same time,

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no notice taken of Sthenelus, the friend and companion of Diomed, whom the same author mentions as present in that expedition.

WITH respect to the first circumstance, I did not choose, for the sake of a fact of so little consequence, and that too depending only upon poetical authority, to deprive myself of two illustrious names very proper for adorning my catalogue of heroes. And as to the second; it will be easily allowed, that I could not have made Sthenelus appear, without assigning him that place in Diomed's friendship, and consequently in the action of the poem, which Ulysses now possesses; and which is the only part in the whole suited to his peculiar character. I must have put a second-rate hero in the place of a first-rate one; and a name little known, in the place of one which every body is acquainted with. Besides, I must have transferred, to Sthenelus, the valor, firmness, and address of Ulysses; because the part he was to act would have

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required these, and must, at the same time, have sunk Ulysses into the character of Sthenelus, for want of a proper opportunity of displaying him in his own. These are inconveniencies too great to be incurred for the sake of a scrupulous agreement with Homer in point of fact; and are therefore, in my opinion, better avoided.

I HAVE explained myself upon the foregoing particulars, for the sake of the learned part of my readers only: and shall now drop a hint for such of them as do not fall under that denomination.

THE following poem is called the *Epi-
goniad*, because the heroes, whose actions it celebrates, have got the name of *The Epi-
goni* (or *Descendants*), being the sons of those who attempted the conquest of Thebes in a former expedition.

THUS far I have endeavoured to apologize for the following performance. It may be censured, no doubt, upon many accounts besides those that have been mentioned:

tioned: but I am persuaded, that what has been said will determine every candid reader, not to be peremptory in condemning what at first view he may dislike; for the specimen of criticism which has been given, will convince him that the real faults of Epic poetry are not easily ascertained, and distinguished from those inconveniencies that must be allowed to take place, in order to prevent greater faults, and produce, upon the whole, a higher degree of perfection.

The following poem is called the Iliad, because the heroes, whose actions it celebrates, have got the name of the Iliad (or Ilium), being the sons of those who attempted the conquest of Troy in a Trojan expedition.

Thus far I have endeavoured to apologise for the following performance. It may be censured, no doubt, upon many accounts besides those that have been mentioned:

THE
EPIGONIAD.

BOOK I.

YE pow'rs of song! with whose immortal fire
Your bard inraptur'd sung Pelides' ire,
To Greece so fatal, when in evil hour,

He brav'd, in stern debate, the sov'reign pow'r,
By like example, teach me now to show
From love, no less, what dire disasters flow.
For when the youth of Greece, by Theseus led,
Return'd to conquer where their fathers bled,
And punish guilty Thebes, by heav'n ordain'd
For perfidy to fall, and oaths profan'd;
Venus, still partial to the Theban arms,
Tydeus' son seduc'd by female charms;
Who, from his plighted faith by passion sway'd,
The chiefs, the army, and himself betray'd.

THIS theme did once your fav'rite bard employ,
Whose verse immortaliz'd the fall of Troy:
But time's oblivious gulf, whose circle draws
All mortal things by fate's eternal laws,

In whose wide vortex worlds themselves are tost,
And rounding swift successively are lost,
This song hath snatch'd. I now resume the strain,
Not from proud hope and emulation vain,
By this attempt to merit equal praise
With worth heroic, born in happier days.
Sooner the weed, that with the Spring appears,
And in the Summer's heat its blossom bears,
But, shriv'ling at the touch of Winter hoar,
Sinks to its native earth, and is no more;
Might match the lofty oak, which long hath stood,
From age to age, the monarch of the wood.
But love excites me, and desire to trace
His glorious steps, tho' with unequal pace.
Before me still I see his awful shade,
With garlands crown'd of leaves which never fade;
He points the path to fame, and bids me scale
Parnassus' slipp'ry height, where thousands fail:
I follow trembling; for the cliffs are high,
And hov'ring round them watchful harpies fly,
To snatch the poet's wreath with envious claws,
And hiss contempt for merited applause.
But if great CAMPBELL, whose auspicious smile
Bids genius yet revive to bless our isle,
Who, from the toils of state and public cares,
Oft with the muses to the shade repairs,
My numbers shall approve, I rise to fame;
For what he praises, envy dares not blame.

WHERE

WHERE high Olympus' hundred heads arise,
 Divide the clouds, and mingle with the skies,
 The gods assembled met; and view'd, from far,
 Thebes and the various combats of the war.
 From all apart the Paphian goddess sat,
 And pity'd in her heart her fav'rite state,
 Dece'd to perish, by the Argive bands,
 Pallas's art, Tydides' mighty hands:
 Pensive she sat, and ev'ry art explor'd
 To charm the victor, and restrain his sword;
 But veil'd her purpose from the piercing ray
 Of Pallas, ever jealous of her sway:
 Unseen the Goddess, from th' Olympian height
 To shady Cyprus bent her rapid flight,
 Down the steep air, as, from the setting skies,
 At ev'n's approach, a streaming meteor flies.
 Where lofty shores the tempest's rage restrain,
 And sleeps, in peace dissolv'd, the hoary main;
 In Love's fam'd isle a deep recess is found,
 Which woods embrace, and precipices bound,
 To Venus sacred; there her temple stands,
 Where azure billows wash the golden sands,
 A hollow cave; and lifts its rocky head,
 With native myrtle crown'd, a lofty shade;
 Whither resort the Naiads of the flood,
 Assembl'd with the nymphs from ev'ry wood;
 Her heifers there they tend, and fleecy store,
 Along the windings of the desert shore,
 Thither the Goddess, from th' Olympian height
 Descending swift, precipitates her flight;

Conspicuous, on the yellow sand, the flood,
 Above the margin of the azure flood.
 From ev'ry grove and stream the nymphs attend,
 And to their Queen in chearful homage bend.
 Some hast'ning to the sacred grott repair,
 And deck its rocky walls with garlands fair;
 Others produce the gifts which Autumn brings,
 And sparkling nectar quench'd with mountain springs.
 And now the Queen, impatient to explain
 Her secret griefs, address'd her list'ning train:

YE rural Goddeffes, immortal fair!
 Who all my triumphs, all my sorrows share;
 I come, afflicted, from th' ethereal tow'rs,
 Where Thebes is doom'd to fall by partial pow'rs.
 Nor can intreaty save my fav'rite state,
 Avert or change the rigour of her fate;
 Tho', breathing incense, were my altar stands,
 With daily gifts supply'd from virgin's hands,
 Juno now rules the senate of the skies,
 And with her dictates ev'ry pow'r complies;
 Her jealous hate the guiltless town condemns
 To wasteful havock, and the rage of flames;
 Since, thither tempted by a stranger's charms,
 The mighty Thunderer forsook her arms.
 Jove's warlike daughter too promotes her aim,
 Who, for Tydides, seeks immortal fame;
 For him employs a mother's watchful cares,
 And the first honours of the war prepares:

To

To frustrate both, a monument would raise
 Of lasting triumph and immortal praise,
 To draw the son of Tydeus from the field,
 To whose victorious hands the town must yield;
 For, by the all-decreeing will of fate,
 He only can o'erthrow the Theban state.
 A way which promises success I'll name:
 The valiant youth adores a lovely dame,
 Alcander's daughter, whom the Graces join'd
 With gifts adorn, above the human kind:
 She with her sire forsook th' Hesperian strand,
 By hostile arms expell'd their native land:
 For Echetus who rules, with tyrant force,
 Where Aufidus directs his downward course,
 And high Garganus, on th' Apulian plain,
 Is mark'd by sailors, from the distant main;
 Oft from her sire had claim'd the lovely maid,
 Who, still averse, to grant his suit delay'd:
 For, barb'rous in extreme, the tyrant feeds
 With mangl'd limbs of men his hungry steeds:
 Impatient of his love, by hostile arms
 And force declar'd, he claim'd her matchless charms,
 Pelignium raz'd, the hero's royal seat,
 Who sought in foreign climes a safe retreat:
 His flight, Ætolia's friendly shore receives,
 Her gen'rous lord protects him and relieves;
 Three cities to possess, the chief obtains,
 With hills for pasture fit, and fruitful plains.
 Cassandra for his bride, Tydides claim'd;
 For hymeneal rites, the hour was nam'd,

When call'd to arms against the Theban tow'rs
 The chief reluctant led his martial pow'rs.
 Hence jealousy and fear his breast divide,
 Fear for the safety of an absent bride;
 Lest, by his passion rous'd, the tyrant rise,
 And unoppos'd usurp the lovely prize.
 He knows not, that, in martial arms conceal'd,
 With him, she braves the terrors of the field;
 True to his side, noon's sultry toil endures,
 And the cold damps that chill the midnight hours,
 If dreams, or signs, could jealousy impart,
 And whet the cares that sting the hero's heart,
 Impatient of his pain, he'd soon prepare,
 With all his native bands, to quit the war.

THE Goddess thus: a Paphian nymph reply'd,
 And drew the list'ning crowd on ev'ry side,
 Zelotypé, whom fell Alecto bore,
 With Cupid mixing on th' infernal shore.

GODDESS! these shafts shall compass what you aim,
 My mother dipt their points in Strygian flame;
 Where'er my father's darts their way have found,
 Mine follow deep, and poison all the wound.
 By these, we soon, with triumph, shall behold
 Pallas deceiv'd, and Juno's self control'd.

THEY all approve; and, to the rural fane,
 Around their sov'reign, moves the joyful train;
 The Goddess plac'd, in order each succeeds,
 With song and dance the genial feast proceeds;

While

While to the sprightly harp, the voice explains
The loves of all the gods in wanton strains:
But when arriv'd the silent hour, which brings
The shades of ev'ning on its dewy wings,
Zelotypé, impatient to pursue
Her journey, hast'ning to her cave, withdrew;
First to her feet the winged shoes she binds,
Which tread the air, and mount the rapid winds;
Aloft they bear her thro' th' ethereal plain,
Above the solid earth and liquid main:
Her arrows next she takes of pointed steel,
For fight too small, but terrible to feel;
Rous'd by their smart, the savage lion roars,
And mad to combat rush the tusky boars,
Of wounds secure; for where their venom lights,
What feels their power all other torment flights.
A figur'd zone, mysteriously design'd,
Around her waist her yellow robe confin'd:
There dark Suspicion lurk'd, of sable hue;
There hasty Rage his deadly dagger drew;
Pale Envy inly pin'd; and by her side
Stood Phrenzy, raging with his chains unty'd;
Affronted Pride with thirst of vengeance burn'd,
And Love's excess to deepest hatred turn'd.
All these the artist's curious hand express'd,
The work divine his matchless skill confess'd.
The virgin last, around her shoulders slung
The bow; and by her side the quiver hung:
Then, springing up, her airy course she bends
For Thebes; and lightly o'er the tents descends.

The son of Tydeus, 'midst his bands, she found
 In arms compleat, reposing on the ground;
 And, as he slept, the hero thus address'd,
 Her form to fancy's waking eye express'd.

THRICE happy youth! whose glory 'tis to share
 The Paphian goddess's peculiar care;
 But happy only, as you now improve
 The warning sent as earnest of her love.
 Her messenger I am: if in your heart,
 The fair Hesperian virgin claims a part:
 If, with regret, you'd see her matchless charms
 Destin'd to bless a happier rival's arms;
 Your coasts defenceless, and unguarded tow'rs
 Consum'd, and ravag'd, by the Latian pow'rs;
 Withdraw your warriors from the Argive host,
 And save whate'er you value, ere 'tis lost.
 For Echetus, who rules with tyrant force,
 Where Ausidus directs his downward course;
 And high Garganus on th' Apulian strand,
 Marks to the mariner the distant land,
 Prepares, by swift invasion, to remove
 Your virgin bride, and disappoint your love.
 Before, excited by her matchless charms,
 He claim'd her from her sire by hostile arms;
 Pelignium raz'd, the hero's royal seat,
 When in your land he sought a safe retreat.
 Cassandra follow'd with reluctant mind,
 To love the tyrant secretly inclin'd;

Tho'

Tho' fierce and barb'rous in extreme he feeds,
 With mangl'd limbs of men, his hungry steeds.
 And now at anchor on the Latian tide,
 With all their train on board, his galleys ride:
 Prepar'd, when favor'd by the western breeze,
 With course direct to cross the narrow seas.
 This to your ear the Paphian goddess sends;
 The rest upon your timely care depends.

SHE said; and turning fix'd upon the bow
 A venom'd shaft, the cause of future woe:
 Then, with reverted aim, the subtle dart
 Dismiss'd, and fix'd it in the hero's heart.
 Amaz'd he wak'd; and, on his arm reclin'd,
 With sighs, thus spoke the anguish of his mind.

WHAT dire disasters all my ways beset!
 How close around me pitch'd the fatal net!
 Here if I stay, nor quit the Argive host,
 Etolia's ravag'd, and Cassandra's lost:
 For sure the pow'rs immortal ne'er in vain,
 To mortals thus the secret fates explain.
 If I retire, the princes must upbraid
 My plighted faith infringing'd, the host betray'd;
 And, to succeeding times, the voice of fame,
 With cowardice and sloth, will blot my name:
 Between these sad alternatives I find
 No distant hopes to sooth my anxious mind;
 Unless I could persuade the Argive pow'rs
 To quit at once these long contested tow'rs:

Nor want I reasons specious in debate
To move the boldest warriors to retreat,
Divided thus, the shame would lighter fall;
Reproach is scarce reproach which touches all.

Thus pond'ring in his mind the hero lay,
Till darkness fled before the morning ray;
Then rose; and, grasping in his mighty hand
The regal staff, the sign of high command,
Pensive and sad forsook his lofty tent,
And sought the son of Dares as he went;
Talthybius he sought, nor sought in vain;
He found the hero 'midst his native train;
And charg'd him to convene, from tent to tent,
The kings to Eteon's lofty monument.

OBEDIENT to the charge, he took his way,
Where Theseus 'midst the bold Athenians lay,
The king of men; in whose superior hand,
Consenting princes plac'd the chief command.
Adrastus next he call'd, whose hoary hairs
By age were whiten'd and a length of cares;
Who first to Thebes the Argive warriors led:
In vain for Polynices' right they bled,
By fate decreed to fall; he now inspires
The sons to conquer, and avenge their fires.
Ulysses heard, who led his martial train,
In twenty ships, across the sounding main:
The youth, in Ithaca, Zacynthus, bred,
And Cephalenia crown'd with lofty shade.

The Spartan monarch, with his brother, heard
 The herald's call; and at the call appear'd:
 Yet young in arms, but destin'd to command
 All Greece, assembled on the Trojan strand.
 The Cretan chief appear'd; and he whose sway
 Messenia and the Pylian realms obey.
 Oileus next he call'd, whose martial pow'rs
 From Bessa move and Scarphe's lofty tow'rs.
 Elpenor too, who from the Chalcian strand
 And fair Eretria led his martial band,
 Appear'd; and all who merited renown
 In ten years war before the Trojan town.
 Achilles only, yet unfit to wield
 The Pelian jav'lin, and the pond'rous shield,
 In Phthia staid; to Chiron's care resign'd,
 Whose wise instructions form'd his mighty mind.
 The chiefs were plac'd. Superior to the rest
 The monarch sat, and thus the peers address.

PRINCES! let Tydeus' valiant son declare
 What cause convenes the senate of the war.
 If of himself, or from advice he knows
 Some secret mischief plotted by our foes,
 Which prudence may prevent, or force resist,
 We come prepar'd to counsel and assist:
 The monarch thus. Tydides thus reply'd,
 And drew attention deep on ev'ry side.

PRINCES! I have not now the host conven'd,
 For secrets by intelligence obtain'd;

But openly my judgment to express
Of mischiefs seen, which prudence must redress :
By war's devouring rage, our martial pow'rs
Grow thin and waste before these hostile tow'rs ;
While Thebes, secure, our vain attempts withstands,
By daily aid sustain'd from distant lands.
Shall we proceed to urge this dire debate,
And press, with hostile arms, the Theban state ?
Or, by experience taught the worst to fear,
Consult the public safety, and forbear ?
Had our great fires, by happier counsels sway'd,
As prudence taught, necessity obey'd ;
Renounc'd in time this fatal strife, which brings
Alike to nations mischief, and to kings ;
Those heroes had not, with their martial train,
Distinguish'd by their fall a foreign plain.
'The Gods themselves, in vengeance for our crimes,
With such disasters lash the guilty times ;
In judgment just, they sow'd the seeds of strife,
To sweep transgressors from the seats of life.
Let him, who obstinately will, proceed,
And wait the vengeance hov'ring o'er his head ;
Since Thebes grows stronger and the Argive pow'rs
Decrease, as famine or the sword devours,
To-morrow I withdraw my martial train ;
Nor stay to perish, like my fire, in vain.

Thus as the hero spoke, the kings divide,
And mingled murmurs round th' assembly glide,
Heard

Heard like the sound which warn the careful swain
Of sudden winds or thick descending rain;
When mountain echoes catch the fullen roar
Of billows bursting on the sandy shore,
And hurl it round in airy circles tost,
Till in the distant clouds the voice is lost.
The king of men to sudden rage resign'd,
At once, the empire of his mighty mind,
With sharp reproaches hast'ning to reply;
But, more sedate, the Pylian monarch nigh,
In act to rise, the angry chief confin'd;
And, whisp'ring, thus address'd with head declin'd:
It ill becomes the prince, whose sov'reign hand
Sways the dread scepter of supreme command,
To be the first in discord; and obey
As headlong passion blindly leads the way.
For when the kings in rash debate engage,
'Tis yours to check and moderate their rage;
Since, of the various ills that can distress
Confed'rate councils and prevent success,
Discord is chief; where'er the fury sways,
The parts she severs, and the whole betrays.

THE hero thus. The king of men remain'd
By sound advice persuad'd, and restrain'd.
Crete's valiant monarch rose; and to the rest,
Thus spoke the dictates of his gen'rous breast.

CONFED'RATE kings, when any leader here
The war dissuades, and warns you to forbear,
I might

I might approve; for, safe beyond the sea,
Creon and Thebes can never injure me.
And when the barb'rous tyrant, unwithstood,
His hot revenge shall quench in Grecian blood;
When Thrace and Macedon, by his command,
Shall ravage Argos and the Pylian strand;
Secure and guarded by the ocean's stream,
Crete's hundred towns shall know it but by fame.
Yet would not I, tho' many such were found,
For open war, advise a peace unsound.
Let Macedon to Thebes her succours send,
And Thrace, with all her barb'rous tribes, descend;
By foreign aids the more our foes increase,
The greater glory waits us from success.
You all remember, on the Isthmean strand
Where neighb'ring seas besiege the strait'ned land,
When Greece enleagu'd a full assembly held,
By public justice to the war compell'd;
That blood of slaughter'd victims drench'd the ground,
While oaths divine the willing nations bound,
Ne'er to return, till our victorious pow'rs
Had level'd with the dust the Theban tow'rs.
Jove heard, and bid applauding thunders roll,
Loud on the right; they shook the starry pole:
For Jove himself is witness of our vows,
And him, who violates, his wrath pursues.
Our joyful shouts the earth, the ocean heard;
We claim'd the omen, and the God rever'd;
In confidence of full success we came,
To conquer Thebes, and win immortal fame.

But

But if the gods and fate our fears distrust,
To public justice and ourselves unjust;
Dishonour'd to our native seats we go,
And yield a lasting triumph to the foe!
Should now, from hence arriv'd, some warrior's ghost
Greet valiant Tydeus on the Stygian coast,
And tell, when danger or distress is near,
That Diomed persuades the rest to fear;
He'd shun the synod of the mighty dead,
And hide his anguish in the deepest shade:
Nature in all an equal course maintains;
The lion's whelp succeeds to awe the plains;
Pards gender pards; from tygers tygers spring;
No doves are hatch'd beneath a vultur's wing:
Each parent's image in his offspring lives;
But nought of Tydeus in his son survives.

He said; and by his sharp reproaches stung,
And wav'ring in suspense the hero hung,
In words now prone to vent his kindl'd ire,
Or fix'd in sullen silence to retire.
As when a current, from the ocean wide,
Rolls, thro' the Cyclades, its angry tide;
Now here, now there, in circling eddies tost,
The certain tenor of its course is lost,
Each wary pilot for his safety fears
In mute suspense, and trembles as he steers:
Such seem'd the tumult of the hero's breast,
And such amazement long restrain'd the rest.

La-

Laertes' son at last the silence broke,
And, rising, thus with prudent purpose spake:

PRINCES! I counsel war; but will not blame
The chief dissenting, whose illustrious name
We all must honor: yet, with patience, hear
What now I offer to the public ear.

I freely own the unnumber'd ills that wait
On strife prolong'd, and war's disastrous state.

With war lean famine and diseases dwell,
And discord fierce, escap'd the bounds of hell.

Where'er on earth her course the fury bends

A crowd of mischiefs still her steps attends;

Fear flies before her swifter than the wind,

And desolation marks her path behind.

Yet her, attended thus, the Gods ordain

Stern arbitress of right to mortal men;

To awe injustice with her lifted spear,

And teach the tyrants of the earth to fear.

If Thebes is perjur'd, and exerts her might

For usurpation in contempt of right;

(If oaths despis'd, and all the ties which bind

The great society of human kind).

For Eteocles in the war she stood,

And drench'd her thirsty fields with Grecian blood;

The Gods themselves have err'd, and plac'd in vain

The scepter'd kings injustice to restrain;

Else she deserves the last extremes to feel

Of wasteful fire and keen devouring steel.

Tho'

Tho' prudence urg'd and equity approv'd,
Joining to second what Tydides mov'd,
We could not hope the war for peace to change;
Thebes thinks not now of safety, but revenge:
Last night, disguis'd, I mingled with the foe,
Their secret hopes and purposes to know;
And found that Creon, with his martial train,
This day intends to brave us on the plain.
Greece too, I heard, by barb'rous sovereigns claim'd,
Some Athens, Argos, some Mycæne nam'd;
Sparta and Pylos, with the various towns
Which grace, in prospect fair, th'Arcadian downs:
Others Etolia challeng'd for their lot;
Nor was even Ithaca itself forgot.
From such vain hopes to boasting they proceed;
Each promises to win some hero's head.
Leophron too, distinguish'd from the rest,
Superior pride and insolence express'd;
In form a God he 'midst th' assembly stood,
By all ador'd the idol of the crowd;
And promis'd, if he chanc'd in fight to meet
'Th' Etolian chief, to stretch him at his feet;
Unless some God oppos'd, or dastard fear,
By sudden flight, should snatch him from his spear.
Can we then hope by peace to end our toils,
When foes secure already share our spoils?
Peace to expect from flight itself were vain;
And flight, I know, your gen'rous souls disdain.

He

He said. The chiefs with indignation burn'd;
And Diomed submitting thus return'd:
Princes! I need not for myself profess,
What all have witness'd, all must sure confess;
That in the front of battle still engag'd,
I never shun'd to mingle where it rag'd.
Nor now does fear persuade me to retire,
False Creon safe, and guilty Thebes entire;
But war and famine thin our martial pow'rs,
Whilst adverse fates protect the Theban tow'rs.
And as the careful shepherd turns his flock
Back from the dangers of the slipp'ry rock,
And from the haunts where foxes mark the ground,
Or rapid rivers flow with banks unsound;
So kings should warn the people to forbear
Attempts, when symptoms mark destruction near.
But since the leaders, with consenting voice,
For war already fix the public choice;
I freely yield, nor ever will divide,
Where all deliberate, and all decide.

THE hero thus, and ceas'd. And thus the rest,
From his high seat, the king of men address'd:
Since war is now decreed, 'tis next our care
That all should speedily for fight prepare.
Creon, this day, intends with all his train
To try our valor on the equal plain;
And will, with diligence, improve an hour,
Which finds us inattentive and secure.

First

First let each leader with his bands in haste
Snatch, as the time allows, a short repast;
Then arm for fight, and to the field proceed,
The phalanx following as the chariots lead.
Who arms the first, and first to combat goes,
Tho' weaker, seems superior to his foes;
But such as lag are more than half o'erthrown,
Less in the eyes of others and their own.

THE monarch thus. The princes all assent.
Straight from the council thro' the host they went,
To arm their bands with diligence and care;
They all obey, and all for fight prepare.

THE

But rich as they are more than half unknown,
 I look in the eyes of others and their own

They all obey and all for their progress
To arm their hands with diligence and care;
Straight from the council thus the host they went
The monarch thus: The prince all alone

THE

EPIGONIAD.

BOOK II.

A SSEMBL'D on the plain, the Theban pow'rs
 In order'd ranks appear before the tow'rs;
 Creon their leader, whose superior sway,
 The martial sons of sacred Thebes obey.
 The chiefs obedient to his high command,
 Rul'd the whole war, and marshal'd every band.
 His valiant son the first, his country's boast,
 Her noblest hope, the bulwark of her host,
 Leophron, to the field the warriors led,
 Whom Thebes herself within her ramparts bred:
 Peneleus, who from Medeon led his pow'rs,
 Echalia low, and Arne's lofty tow'rs:
 Leitus from Thespia, where the verdant shades
 Of Helicon invite the tuneful maids:
 Porthenor rich, whose wide possessions lay
 Where fam'd Æsopus winds his wat'ry way;
 Beneath Cytheron's height, the lofty mound
 Which parts Bœotian plains from hostile ground:
 Phericles, who the valiant warriors led
 In Mycaleffus, Harma, Aulis, bred:

An-

Andremon, leader of his native band,
 From lofty Schoenus on th' Ismenian strand:
 And Anthedon where swift Euripus pent
 Divides Eubœa from the continent:
 These rul'd the Theban pow'rs beneath the care
 Of Creon, chief and sov'reign of the war.

THE aids from Macedon the next were plac'd;
 Their shining casques with waving plumage grac'd;
 A wolf's grey hide, around their shoulders flung,
 With martial grace above their armour hung:
 From high Dodona's sacred shades they came;
 Cassander led them to the fields of fame.
 The Thracians next, a formidable band;
 Nations and tribes distinct, in order stand:
 Byzantines fierce, whose crooked keels divide
 The Pontic gulf, and stem the downward tide:
 In Grecian arms the hardy warriors move,
 With pond'rous shields and glitt'ring spears above.
 The Thynians next were marshal'd on the field;
 Each with a faulcion arm'd and lunar shield,
 Whose bending horns a verge of silver bound;
 And figures fierce their brazen helmets crown'd:
 With these the Daci came, a martial race;
 Fierce as their clime, they rear the pond'rous mace;
 In giant strength secure, they scorn the spear,
 And crush, with weighty blows, the ranks of war;
 From Ister's icy streams, a barb'rous crowd,
 In shaggy furs, a herd promiscuous stood;

Swift

Swift as their savage game; for wide they roam
In tribes and nations, ignorant of home;
Excelling all who boast superior skill
To send the winged arrow swift to kill;
These Rhœsus rul'd, of various tribes compos'd,
By various leaders on the field dispos'd.

To fight the Argives mov'd in close array;
Bright shone their arms and flash'd redoubl'd day;
Resolv'd, and still as silent night, they go;
Nor with insulting shouts provoke the foe.
Thick from their steps, in dusky volumes, rise
The parched fields, and darken all the skies.
Beneath the shade, the ardent warriors close;
Their shields and helmets ring with sounding blows.

FIRST Menelaus struck a Theban lord;
His armed breast the weighty lance explor'd;
Burst the close mail; the shining breast-plate tore;
And, from life's fountain drew a stream of gore.
Supine he fell amidst his native bands,
And wrench'd the fixed dart with dying hands.
To spoil the slain the son of Atreus flies;
The Thebans interpose with hostile cries;
And Creon's valiant son his buckler spread,
An orb of triple brass to guard the dead:
As Jove's imperial bird her wings extends,
And from the shepherds rage her young defends;
So stern Leophron bore his ample shield;
Like Mars, he stood the terror of the field.
With dread unusual check'd, the Spartan band
Recoil'd; Atrides only dar'd to stand.

He

He thus began. Presumptuous youth! forbear
To tempt the fury of my flying spear.
That warrior there was by my javelin slain,
His spoils to guard you interpose in vain.
Atrides thus; and Creon's son replies:
Thy lance I dread not, and thy threats despise.
This hand hath many a chief of high renown,
And braver warriors oft in fight o'erthrown:
Like theirs thy fall shall dignify my spear,
And future boasters thence be taught to fear.
Thus as he spoke his weighty lance he threw
At Atreus's son; which rising as it flew
Upon the hero's crest with furious sway,
Glanc'd as it pass'd and shav'd the plumes away.
Hissing amidst the Spartan ranks it came,
And struck a youth of undistinguish'd name:
Cold, thro' his breast, the steel and polish'd wood
A passage forc'd, and drew a stream of blood.

His lance Atrides next prepares to throw;
Poises it long, and meditates the blow:
Then, from his hand dismiss'd with happier aim,
Thund'ring against the Theban shield it came;
Where wreath'd around a mimic serpent twin'd,
With plates of polish'd silver lightly join'd:
Thence turn'd with course oblique it drove along,
And spent its fury on the vulgar throng.
Leophron straight his flaming faulcion drew,
And at his foe, with eager fury, flew:
As stooping from above, an eagle springs
To snatch his prey, and shoots upon his wings.

The

The Spartan warrior dreads impending fate;
And, turning, meditates a quick retreat.
As when a shepherd swain, in desert shades,
The blood-nurs'd offspring of the wolf invades;
If, from the opening of some thicket near,
With rage inflam'd, the angry dam appear,
With darts at first, and threat'ning shouts he tries,
To awe the guardian, and assert the prize:
But, when she springs, the close encounter dreads,
And, trembling, from the angry foe recedes.
So Menelaus fled. His native train,
In wild disorder, scatters o'er the plain.

His valiant brother heard upon the right,
Where in his lofty car he rul'd the fight;
And to his squire Nicomachus: With speed,
Turn to the left, and urge the flying steed:
For, if these sounds deceive not, Sparta fails;
And, with a tide of conquest, Thebes prevails.
Quick as the word, the silver reins he drew,
And thro' the fight the bounding chariot flew.
Like some swift vessel, when a prosp'rous gale
Favours her course, and stretches ev'ry sail;
Above the parting waves she lightly flies,
And smooth behind a tract of ocean lies:
So, 'midst the combat, rush'd the lofty car;
Pierc'd the thick tumult, and disjoin'd the war.
But Clytodemus's son a jav'lin threw;
With force impell'd, it lighten'd as it flew,
And struck the right-hand courser to the ground,
Ethon, for swiftness in the race renown'd.

Behind his ear the deadly weapon stood,
Loos'd his high neck, and drew a stream of blood.
Groaning he sunk; and spread his flowing mane,
A shining circle, on the dusty plain.
Intangled deep the royal chariot stood,
With hostile spears beset, an iron wood.

FROM his high seat the Spartan hero sprung
Amid the foe; his clanging armour rung.
Before the king, the armed bands retire;
As shepherd swains avoid a lion's ire,
When fierce from famine on their darts he turns,
And rage indignant in his eye-balls burns.
Amid the fight, distinguish'd like the star
Of ev'ning, shone his silver arms afar;
Which, o'er the hills, its setting light displays;
And marks the ruddy west with silver rays.
Pale and amaz'd his brother chief he found,
An armed circle of his friends around.
Alas, my brother! have I liv'd to see
Thy life redeem'd with deathless infamy!
(The hero cry'd) far better that a ghost
You now had wander'd on the Stygian coast,
And by a glorious fall preserv'd your name
Safe and unblasted by the breath of fame;
Which soon shall tell the world, amaz'd to hear,
That Menelaus taught the host to fear.

By conscious guilt subdu'd the youth appear'd;
Without reply, the just reproach he heard:
Confounded, to the ground he turn'd his eyes;
Indignant thus the great Atrides cries:

Myæ-

Mycæneans! Spartans! taught to seek renown
From dangers greatly brav'd and battles won;
Ah warriors! will ye fly, when close behind
Dishonour follows swifter than the wind?
Return to glory: whether Jove ordains,
With wreaths of conquest, to reward your pains,
Or dooms your fall; *be* merits equal praise,
With him who conquers, he who bravely dies.
The hero thus; and, like swift light'ning driv'n
Thro' scatter'd clouds along the vault of heav'n
By Jove's dread arm, his martial voice inspir'd
The fainting host, and ev'ry bosom fir'd.
Again upon the conqu'ring foe they turn'd:
The war again, in all its fury, burn'd.
As when the deep, which ebbing from the land
Along the coast displays a waste of sand,
Returns; and, blown by angry tempests, roars
A stormy deluge 'gainst the rocky shores:
So, rushing to the fight, the warriors came;
Ardent to conquer, and retrieve their fame.

BEFORE his host the son of Creon stood,
With labour'd dust obscure, and hostile blood;
He thus exclaim'd: And shall this dastard train
(Warriors of Thebes!) dispute the field again?
Their better chief, I know him, leads the band;
But fate shall soon subdue him by my hand.
He said; and, at the king, his jav'lin threw;
Which, aim'd amiss, with erring fury flew.

Across the armed ranks it swiftly drove,
 The warriors stooping as it rush'd above.
 The Spartan hero aim'd his weighty spear;
 And thus to Jove address'd an ardent prayer:
 Hear me, great Sire of gods! whose boundless sway
 The fates of men and mortal things obey;
 Whose sov'reign hand, with unresisted might,
 Depresses or exalts the scales of fight:
 Now grant success to my avenging hand,
 And stretch this dire destroyer on the sand.
 Jove, grant me now to reach his hated life,
 And save my warriors in this doubtful strife.
 The hero thus; and sent his weighty spear.
 With speed it flew, and pierc'd the yielding air;
 Swift, as a falcon to her quarry springs,
 When down the wind she stretches on her wings.
 Leophron, stooping, shun'd the deadly stroke,
 Which on the shield of Hegisander broke.
 Vain now his lute; in vain his melting strains,
 Soft as Apollo's on the Lycian plains:
 His soul excluded, seeks the dark abodes
 By Styx embrac'd, the terror of the Gods;
 Where furlly Charon, with his lifted oar,
 Drives the light ghosts, and rules the dreary shore.

WITH grief Leophron saw the warrior slain!
 He snatch'd a pond'rous mare from off the plain,
 Cut in the Thracian woods, with snags around
 Of pointed steel with iron circles bound.

Heav'd

Heav'd with gigantic force the club to throw,
He swung it thrice, and hurl'd it at his foe.
Thund'ring upon his armed head it fell;
The brazen helmet rang with stunning knell.
As when a rock by forceful engines thrown,
Where hostile arms invest a frontier town,
Threat'ning destruction, rolls along the skies;
And war itself stands wond'ring as it flies:
Falls on some turret's top, the structure bends
Beneath the tempest, and at once descends
With hideous crash; thus, stooping to the ground,
Atrides sunk; his silver arms resound.
But Pallas, mixing in the dire debate,
A life to rescue yet not due to fate,
Had o'er his head her cloudy buckler held;
And half the fury of the blow repell'd.
The son of Creon rush'd to seize his prize,
The hero's spoils; and thus exulting cries:
Warriors of Thebes! your labours soon shall cease,
And final victory restore your peace;
For great Atrides, by my valour slain,
A lifeless corse, lies stretch'd upon the plain.
Only be men! and make the Argive bands
Dread in succeeding times your mighty hands;
That foes no more, when mad ambition calls,
With dire alarms may shake your peaceful walls.
Exulting thus, the hero rush'd along;
And kindled, with his shouts, the vulgar throng.
Resolv'd and firm the Spartan warriors stand
Around their king, a formidable band.

Their spears, protended thick, the foe restrain'd;
Their bucklers join'd, the weighty war sustain'd.
But as a mountain wolf, from famine bold,
On prey intent, surveys the midnight fold;
Where, in the shelter of some arching rock,
At ev'n the careful shepherd pens his flock;
On spoil and ravage bent, he stalks around,
And meditates to spring the lofty mound:
Impatient thus the Theban chief survey'd
The close-compacted ranks on ev'ry side;
To find where least the ferred orb could bear
The strong impression of a pointed war.
Him Menelaus saw, with anguish stung;
And, from amidst his armed warriors, sprung
With wrath inflam'd; as starting from a brake,
Against some trav'ller, darts a crested snake.
His rage in vain the Theban ranks withstand;
The bravest warriors sink beneath his hand.
Clytander, Iphitus, Palemon, fam'd
For chariots rul'd and fiery courfers tam'd;
And Iphialtes, like the God of light,
Whose pointed arrows thinn'd the lines of fight:
These the first transports of his fury feel.
Against Leophron now he lifts his steel,
And speeds to vengeance; but, in full career,
He stood arrested by a vulgar spear.
Fix'd in his thigh the barbed weapon hung,
Relax'd the muscles, and the nerves unstrung.
The Spartan warriors to his succour flew;
Against the darts their ample shields they threw,

Which

Which storm'd around ; and, from the rage of war,
Convey'd the wounded hero to his car.

WITH fierce impatience Creon's son beheld
The Spartan warriors still dispute the field.
Before their leader fall'n the heroes stood ;
Their spears erected, like the sacred wood
Which round some altar rises on the plain,
The mystic rites to hide from eyes profane.
Thither his native bands the hero turn'd ;
Drawn to a wedge, again the combat burn'd.
Thro' all the air a storm of jav'lins sung ;
With sounding blows each hollow buckler rung.
First Enopæus felt a deadly wound,
Who in Amycle till'd the fruitful ground ;
To great Andremon's spear he yields his breath,
And starts and quivers in the grasp of death.
Next Hegesippus press'd th' infanguin'd plain ;
Leophron's jav'lin mix'd him with the slain.
On Malea's cliffs he fed his fleecy store,
Along the windings of the craggy shore.
He vow'd to Phœbus, for a safe return,
An hundred victims on his hearth to burn.
In vain ! the God, in justice, had decreed,
His gifts contemn'd, the offerer to bleed :
For violence augmented still his store ;
And, unreliev'd, the stranger left his door.
Prone on the bloody ground the warrior fell ;
His soul indignant sought the shades of hell.

NEXT Arcas, Cleon, valiant Chromius, dy'd ;
With Dares, to the Spartan chiefs ally'd.
And Phœmius, whom the Gods in early youth
Had form'd for virtue and the love of truth ;
His gen'rous soul to noble deeds they turn'd,
And love to mankind in his bosom burn'd :
Cold thro' his throat the hissing weapon glides,
And on his neck the waving locks divides.
His fate the Graces mourn'd. The Gods above,
Who sit around the starry throne of Jove,
On high Olympus bending from the skies,
His fate beheld with sorrow-streaming eyes.
Pallas alone, unalter'd and serene,
With secret triumph saw the mournful scene :
Not hard of heart ; for none of all the pow'rs,
In earth or ocean, or th' Olympian tow'rs,
Holds equal sympathy with human grief,
Or with a freer hand bestows relief ;
But conscious that a mind by virtue steel'd,
To no impression of distress will yield ;
That, still unconquer'd, in its awful hour
O'er death it triumphs with immortal pow'r.

Now Thebes prevailing, Sparta's host retreats ;
As falls some rampart where the ocean beats :
Unable to resist its stormy way,
Mounds heap'd on mounds, and bars of rock give way ;
With inundation wide the deluge reigns,
Drowns the deep valleys, and o'erspreads the plains.

Thus

Thus o'er the field, by great Leophron led,
Their foes repuls'd, the Theban squadrons spread.
The hero, stooping where Atrides lay,
Rent from his head the golden casque away;
His mail unlock'd; and loos'd the golden chains,
The zone which by his side the sword sustains.
The monarch now amid the vulgar dead,
For wheels to crush and armed hoofs to tread,
Defenceless lay. But stern Leophron's hate
Retriev'd him, thus expos'd, from certain fate.
In semblance dead, he purpos'd to convey
The body naked to some public way;
Where dogs obscene, and all the rav'nous race,
With wounds unsightly, might his limbs disgrace.
Straight he commands; and to a neighb'ring grove,
His warriors, charg'd, the Spartan chief remove.
On their broad shields they bore him from the plain,
To sense a corse, and number'd with the slain.
His fixed eyes in hov'ring shades were drown'd;
His mighty limbs in death-like fetters bound.
The shouts tumultuous and the din of war,
His ear receiv'd like murmurs heard afar;
Or as some peasant hears, securely laid
Beneath a vaulted cliff or woodland shade,
When o'er his head unnumber'd insects sing
In airy rounds, the children of the spring.

ADRASTUS' valiant son, with grief, beheld
The Spartans to inglorious flight compell'd;

Their valiant chief resign'd to hostile hands,
 He thus aloud address'd the scatt'ring bands;
 What shame, ye warriors! if ye thus expose
 Your leader to the injuries of foes!
 Tho' all should quit him, honor bids you bring
 His reliques back, or perish with your king.
 Leophron sure injuriously ordains,
 With insults, to deface his dear remains;
 Spurn'd by the feet of men, expos'd and bare,
 For dogs obscene and rav'nous birds to share.
 Exclaiming thus, thro' all the field he flew;
 And call'd the host the conflict to renew.
 They stop, they charge; again the combat burns:
 They bleed, they conquer, and retreat by turns.
 Hegialus excites the dire debate;
 And, by example, leads the work of fate:
 For now he sees Atrides borne afar,
 By hostile hands, beyond the lines of war.
 With indignation fierce his bosom glows;
 He rushes fearless 'midst a host of foes;
 And now had merited a deathless name,
 And with a deed immortal crown'd his fame,
 Atrides sav'd; but fate's supreme command
 That honor destin'd for a mightier hand.

LEOPHRON vex'd, that twice constrain'd to yield,
 The Spartan warriors re-assum'd the field,
 His pow'rs address'd: For ever lost our fame,
 Dishonour foul will blot the Theban name;

If

If dastard foes, twice routed and pursu'd,
Shall brave the victors, still with rage renew'd.
Your glory gain'd with vigor now maintain;
Nor let us conquer thus and bleed in vain.
He said, and 'gainst the Argive hero turn'd;
With martial wrath his ardent bosom burn'd;
Who, fearless and undaunted, dar'd to wait;
Nor by ignoble flight declin'd his fate.
For, at the Theban chief, his lance he threw,
Which, aim'd amiss, with erring fury flew:
Beyond the hostile ranks the weapon drove;
The warriors stooping as it rush'd above.
Not so the Theban spear; with happier aim,
Full to the center of the shield, it came;
And, rising swiftly from the polish'd round,
His throat transfix'd, and bent him to the ground,
To spoil the slain the ardent victor flew:
The Spartan bands the bloody shock renew;
Fierce to the charge with tenfold rage return,
And all at oncè with thirst of vengeance burn.
O'er all the field the raging tumult grows;
And ev'ry helmet rings with sounding blows:
But most around the Argive hero dead;
There toil the mightiest, there the bravest bleed,
As when outrageous winds the ocean sweep,
And from the bottom stir the hoary deep;
O'er all the wat'ry plain the tempest raves,
Mixing in conflict loud the angry waves:
But where some pointed cliff the surface hides,
Whose top unseen provokes the angry tides,

With tenfold fury there the billows fly,
And mount in smoak and thunder to the sky.

ADRASTUS, by unactive age restrain'd,
Behind the army on a mount remain'd;
Under an oak the hoary warrior sat,
And look'd and listen'd to the dire debate.
Now, tam'd by age, his courfers stood unbound;
His uselefs arms lay scatter'd on the ground;
Two aged heralds there the chief obey'd;
The squire attending by his master stay'd.
And thus the king: What sounds invade mine ear?
My friends! what sad disaster must we hear?
Some hero's fall; for with the shouts, I know
Loud lamentation mixt, and sounds of woe.
So were we told, when mighty Tydeus fell,
And Polynices trod the path to hell;
So rag'd the combat o'er the heroes slain,
And such the din and tumult of the plain.
He said; and list'ning (what he greatly fear'd)
Hegialus's name at last he heard
Mix'd with the noise; and, sick'ning at the sound,
By grief subdu'd, fell prostrate on the ground.
But rage succeeding and despair, he rose
Eager to rush amid the thickest foes.
His spear he grasp'd, impatient for the fight;
And pond'rous shield, unequal to the weight.
Him frantic thus his wife attendants held;
And to retire with prudent care compell'd.

Impa-

Impatient of his state, by quick returns,
With grief he melts, with indignation burns,
And thus at last: Stern rules of the sky!
Whose sport is man, and human misery;
What deed of mine has stirr'd thy boundless rage,
And call'd for vengeance on my helpless age?
Have I, by sacrilege, your treasures drain'd;
Your altars slighted, or your rites profan'd?
Did I forget my holy vows to pay?
Or bid you witness, and my faith betray?
Has lawless rapine e'er increas'd my store,
Or unreliev'd the stranger left my door?
If not; in justice, can your stern decree
With wrath pursue my guiltless race and me?
Here valiant Tydeus, Polynices fell;
In one sad hour they trod the path to hell:
For them my daughters mourn, their sorrows flow
Still fresh, and all their days are spent in woe.
Hegialus remain'd my hopes to raise;
The only comfort of my joyless days:
In whom I saw my vigorous youth return,
And all our native virtues brighter burn.
He's now no more; and to the nether skies,
Banish'd by fate, a bloodless spectre flies.
For what, ye Gods! has unrelenting fate
Curs'd my misfortunes with so long a date?
That thus I live to see our antient race
At once extinguish'd, and for ever cease!
Gods! grant me now, the only boon I crave,
For all my sorrows past, a peaceful grave:

New

Now let me perish, that my fleeting ghost
May reach my son in Pluto's shady coast;
Where, join'd for ever, kindred souls enjoy
An union fix'd, which nothing can destroy.
He said; and sinking prostrate on the ground,
His furrow'd cheeks with floods of sorrow drown'd;
And, furious in the rage of grief, o'erspread
With dust the reverend honors of his head.

THE

EPIGONIAD.

BOOK III.

THE Spartan bands, with thirst of vengeance fir'd,
The fight maintain'd; nor from their toils
respir'd.

Before the hero fall'n the warriors stand,
Firm as the chains of rock which guard the strand;
Whose rooted strength the angry ocean braves,
And bounds the fury of his bursting waves.
So Sparta stood; their ferred bucklers bar
The Theban phalanx, and exclude the war.
While from the field, upon their shoulders laid,
His warriors sad the Argive prince convey'd;
Leophron saw, with indignation fir'd,
And, with his shouts, the ling'ring war inspir'd.
Again the rigor of the shock returns;
The slaughter rages, and the combat burns;
Till, push'd and yielding to superior sway,
In slow retreat the Spartan ranks gave way.
As, in some channel pent, intangled wood
Reluctant stirs before the angry flood;

Which,

Which, on its loaded current, slowly heaves
The spoils of forests mix'd with harvest sheaves.

PALLAS observ'd, and from th' Olympian height
Precipitated swift her downward flight.
Like Cleon's valiant son, the Goddess came;
The same her stature, and her arms the same.
Descending from his chariot to the ground,
The son of Tydeus, 'midst his bands, she found;
His steeds unrul'd: for, stretch'd before the wheel,
Lay the bold driver pierc'd with Theban steel.
On the high car her mighty hand she laid;
And thus address'd the valiant Diomed:
The Spartan warriors, prince! renounce the fight,
O'ermatch'd by numbers and superior might:
While adverse fate their valiant chief restrains,
Who dead or wounded with the foe remains;
Hegialus lies lifeless on the earth,
Brother to her from whom you claim your birth:
The great Atrides, as he press'd to save,
Leophron's jav'lin mark'd him for the grave.
To vengeance haste; and, ere it is too late,
With speedy succor stop impending fate:
For stern Leophron, like the rage of flame,
With ruin threatens all the Spartan name.

THE Goddess, thus; Tydides thus replies:
How partial are the counsels of the skies!
For vulgar merit oft the Gods with care
Honor and peace and happiness prepare;

While

While worth, distinguish'd, by their partial hate,
Submits to all the injuries of fate.
Adrastus thus, with justice, may complain
His daughters widow'd, sons in battle slain.
In the devoted line myself I stand;
And here must perish by some hostile hand:
Yet not, for this, I shun the works of war,
Nor sculk inglorious when I ought to dare.
And now I'll meet yon terror of the plain;
To crown his conquests, or avenge the slain.
But wish some valiant youth, to rule my car
And push the horses thro' the shock of war,
Were present; for, extended in his gore,
The brave Speusippus knows his charge no more.

Thus as the hero spoke, Cassandra heard,
And present, to assume the charge, appear'd.
By love inspir'd, she sought the fields of war;
Her hero's safety was her only care.
A polish'd casque her lovely temples bound,
With flow'rs of gold and various plumage crown'd;
Confus'dly gay, the peacock's changeful train,
With gaudy colors mix'd of ev'ry grain;
The virgin white, the yellow's golden hue,
The regal purple, and the shining blue,
With female skill compos'd. The shield she bore
With flow'rs of gold was mark'd and spangled o'er:
Light and of slend'rest make, she held a lance;
Like some mock warrior armed for the dance,
When

When spring's return and music's chearful strain
The youth invite to frolic on the plain.

ILLUSTRIOUS chief, the armed virgin said,
To rule your steeds on me the task be laid;
Skill'd to direct their course with steady rein,
To wake their fiery mettle, or restrain;
To stop, to turn, the various arts I know;
To push them on direct, or shun the foe.
With ready hand your voice I shall obey;
And urge their fury where you point the way.
The virgin thus; and thus Tydides said:
Your zeal I honor, but reject your aid.
Fierce are my steeds; their fury to restrain
The strongest hand requires and stiffest rein:
For oft, their mettle rous'd, they rush along;
Nor feel the biting curb, or sounding thong.
Oft have I seen you brave the toils of fight,
With dauntless courage but unequal might.
Small is your force; and, from your arm unstrung,
The harmless lance is impotently flung.
Yet not for this you shun the martial strife,
Patient of wounds and prodigal of life.
Where'er I combat, faithful to my side,
No danger awes you, and no toils divide.
Yet grudge not that your service I decline;
Homocleon's better hand shall guide the rein:
His manly voice my horses will obey,
And move submissive to his firmer sway.

Th' Etolian warrior thus; and, with a bound,
Rose to his lofty chariot from the ground:
The Goddess to the driver's seat proceeds;
Assumes the reins, and winds the willing steeds.
On their smooth sides the sounding lash she plies;
And thro' the fight the smoaking chariot flies.
Th' Athenians soon they pass'd; and Phocians strong,
Who from fair Crissa led their martial throng.
Th' Arcadians next from Alpheus' silver flood,
And hardy Eleans, grim with dust and blood,
In order rang'd. As when some pilot spies
The rocky cliffs in long succession rise,
When near the land his galley scours the shores,
By prosp'rous winds impell'd and speeding oars:
So, hastening to the fight, the hero flew.
And now the Spartan host appears in view:
By wounds subdu'd, their bravest warriors lay;
Others, by shameful flight, their fear obey;
The rest, in slow retreat, forsake the field,
O'ermatch'd by numbers, and constrain'd to yield.
Th' Etolian hero saw, and rais'd his voice,
Loud as the silver trumpet's martial noise;
And rush'd to fight: through all the field it flew;
The host at once the happy signal knew;
And joy'd, as they who, from the found'ring ship
Escap'd, had struggled long amid the deep:
Faint from despair, when hope and vigor fail,
If, hast'ning to their aid, appears a sail;
With force renew'd their weary limbs they strain,
And climb the slipp'ry ridges of the main.

So

So joy'd the Spartans to repulse the foe;
With hope restor'd, their gen'rous bosoms glow:
While Thebes, suspended 'midst her conquest, stands;
And feels a sudden check thro' all her bands.

LEOPHRON only, far before the rest,
Tydides waited with a dauntless breast.
Firm and unaw'd the hardy warrior stood;
Like some fierce boar amid his native wood,
When armed swains his gloomy haunts invade,
And trace his footsteps thro' the lonely shade;
Resolv'd he hears approach the hostile sound,
Grinds his white teeth, and threat'ning glares around:
So stood Leophron trusting in his might,
And shook his armor, eager for the fight.
Tydides saw; and, springing from his car,
Thus brav'd the hero, as he rush'd to war:
O son unhappy, of a sire accurst!
The plague of all, and fated to the worst!
The injuries of Greece demand thy breath;
See, in my hand, the instrument of death.
Hegialus's ghost shall less deplore
His fate untimely on the Stygian shore,
When banish'd from the light, your shade shall come
To mingle with the dark infernal gloom.
Tydides thus; and Creon's son replies:
Your fear in vain, by boasting, you disguise;
Such vulgar art a novice oft confounds,
To scenes of battle new and martial sounds;
Tho'

Tho' lost on me, who dwell amid alarms,
And never met a greater yet in arms.

Thus as the warrior spoke, his lance with care
He aim'd, and sent it hissing thro' the air.
On Diomed's broad shield the weapon fell;
Loud rung the echoing brass with stunning knell;
But the strong orb, by Vulcan's labor bound,
Repell'd, and sent it blunted to the ground.
Tydides next his pond'rous jav'lin threw:
With force impell'd, it brighten'd as it flew;
And pierc'd the border of the Theban shield,
Where, wreath'd around, a serpent guards the field;
Through the close mail an easy passage found,
And mark'd his thigh, in passing, with a wound.
Now in close fight the angry chiefs engage;
Like two fell griffins rous'd to equal rage;
Pois'd on their rolling trains they fiercely rise,
With blood-bespotted crests and burning eyes;
With poison fraught they aim their deadly stings,
Clasp their sharp fangs, and mix their rattling wings.
In combat thus, the ardent warriors clos'd,
With shield to shield, and foot to foot oppos'd.
First at his foe Leophron aim'd a stroke;
But, on his polish'd casque, the faulcion broke:
From the smooth steel the shiver'd weapon sprung;
Aloft in air its hissing splinters sung.
Not so, Tydides, did thy weapon fail;
With force impell'd it pierc'd the silver mail,

Whose

Whose sliding plates the warrior's neck surround :
A tide of gore came rushing from the wound.
Stagg'ring to earth he sunk with head declin'd;
And life in long convulsive throbs resign'd.
Nor stop'd Tydides to despoil the slain;
The warrior Goddess led him, cross the plain,
Towards the grove where great Atrides lay;
Th' immortal spear she stretch'd, and mark'd the way.

THITHER amid surrounding foes they haste;
Who shun'd them, still retreating, as they pass'd:
And ent'ring found the Spartan hero laid
On the green sward, beneath the bow'ring shade.
The guard secure, lay stretch'd upon the ground;
Their shields resign'd, their launces pitch'd around:
One only near a winding riv'let stood,
Which turn'd its wand'ring current thro' the wood;
His helmet fill'd with both his hands he rear'd,
In act to drink; when in the grove appear'd
Th' Etolian prince. His armour's fiery blaze
The dark recess illumin'd with its rays.
Amaz'd the Theban stood; and, from his hand,
The helmet slip'd, and roll'd upon the sand.
Not more afraid the wond'ring swain descries,
'Midst night's thick gloom, a flaming meteor rise;
Sent by the furies, as he deems, to sow
Death and diseases on the earth below.
Tydides comes! with fault'ring voice he cry'd,
And straight to flight his willing limbs apply'd.
With sudden dread surpris'd the guards retire;
As shepherd swains avoid a lion's ire,

Who

Who roams the heights and plains, from famine bold,
The stall to ravage or assault the fold.

Now, lifeless as he lay, the martial maid
Atrides, with a pitying eye, survey'd;
And with her spear revers'd, the hero shook:
The touch divine his iron slumber broke;
As when his drowsy mate the shepherd swain
Stirs with his crook, and calls him to the plain;
When in the east he sees the morning rise,
And red'ning o'er his head the colour'd skies.
When from the ground his head the hero rais'd,
In full divinity the Goddesses blaz'd;
Her left, reveal'd, the dreadful Ægis rears,
Whose ample field the snaky Gorgon bears;
Th' immortal lance stood flaming in the right,
Which scatters and confounds the ranks of fight.
Speechless the chiefs remain'd; amazement strong,
In mute suspense and silence, held them long.
And thus the Goddesses: Atreus' son! arise,
Confess the partial favour of the skies.
For thee I leave the Thund'rer's lofty seat,
To wake thee slumb'ring on the verge of fate;
To you let Diomed his arms resign;
Unequal were your force to govern mine;
His stronger arm shall bear this pond'rous shield;
His better hand the weighty jav'lin wield.
Arise! be sudden, for your foes draw near;
Assur'd to conquer when the Gods appear.

THE Goddess thus; and, mixing with the wind,
Left in a heap her shining arms behind
Upon the field; with loud harmonious peal,
Th' immortal buckler rung, and golden mail.
And thus Atrides, rising from the ground:
In this, approv'd is hoar tradition found;
That oft, descending from th' ethereal fow'rs,
To mix with mortals, come the heav'nly pow'rs:
But ne'er till now I saw a God appear,
Or more than human voice did ever hear.
Do you, my friend, assure these arms divine;
The mortal and inferior shall be mine.
Atrides thus; and Diomed reply'd:
To heav'n obedience must not be deny'd;
Else you yourself th' immortal arms should wield,
And I with these attend you on the field.
But of the Pow'rs above, whose sov'reign sway
The fates of men and mortal things obey,
Pallas, with surest vengeance, still pursues
Such as obedience to her will refuse.

He said; and straight his shining arms unbound,
The casque, the mail, the buckler's weighty round;
With secret joy th' immortal helmet took:
High on its crest the waving plumage shook.
This whosoever wears, his sharp'ned eyes
All dangers mock of ambush and surprize;
Their ray unquench'd, the midnight shade divides;
No cunning covers, and no darkness hides.

The

The breast-plate next he takes, whose matchless art
Firm courage fixes in the bounding heart;
The rage of war unmov'd the wearer braves,
And rides serene amid the stormy waves:
The glitt'ring mail a starry baldrick bound,
His arm sustain'd the buckler's weighty round;
Impenetrably strong, its orb can bear
And turn, like softest lead, the pointed spear;
Nor yields to aught, in earth or heav'n above,
But the dread thunder of almighty Jove.
Th' immortal spear the hero last did wield,
Which fixes conquest and decides a field;
Nor strength nor numbers can its rage withstand,
Sent by a mortal or immortal hand.

Thus arm'd to meet the foe Tydides mov'd,
And glory'd conscious of his might improv'd;
Like the proud steed rejoicing in his force,
When the shrill trumpet wakes him to the course:
Fierce and impatient of restraint, he strains
With stiffen'd neck against the galling reins.
Taller he seem'd; as when the morning spread,
With golden lustre, crowns some mountain's head
In early spring; when, from the meads below,
A wreath of vapors binds his rocky brow;
In cloudy volumes settling as they rise,
They lift the lofty prospect to the skies:
So in immortal arms the chief appear'd,
His stature broad display'd and higher rear'd.

Now from the field approaching to the grove,
Embattel'd thick, the Theban warriors move;
Slowly they move, as swains with doubtful steps
Approach the thicket where a lion sleeps.
Tydides saw; and, rushing from the shade,
The Spartan call'd and to the combat led.
Unaw'd the hero met the hostile band;
Nor could united force his rage withstand.
They wheel'd aloof; as when a dragon springs
From his dark den, and rears his pointed wings
Against approaching swains, when summer burns,
And the fresh lakes to parched desert turns;
They fly dispers'd, nor tempt his fatal ire,
His wrath-swoln neck and eyes of living fire:
So fled the Thebans, nor escap'd by flight.
Amid their squadrons, like a falcon light,
The hero sprung; who, stooping from the skies,
The feather'd race disperses as he flies.
Still from his hand th' immortal weapon flew;
And ev'ry flight an armed warrior flew.
Andremon first, beneath his mighty hand,
Of life bereft, lay stretch'd upon the sand.
Pherecydes gigantic press'd the plain;
And valiant Tereus sunk amid the slain.
Warriors to these of vulgar name succeed;
And all his path is mark'd with heaps of dead.
As when some woodman, by incessant strokes,
Bestrews a mountain with its falling oaks;
Fells the thick planes, the hawthorn's flow'ry shade,
The poplar fair by passing currents fed,

The laurel with unfading verdure crown'd;
Heaps roll'd on heaps, the forest sinks around:
So spreads the slaughter as the chief proceeds;
At ev'ry stroke an armed warrior bleeds.
Atrides combats by the hero's side,
To share his glory and the toil divide:
Unmov'd amid the hostile ranks they go;
Before them far retreats the routed foe.

AND now the Spartan host appear'd in fight,
By toil subdu'd and ling'ring in the fight.
Their valiant leader saw, and rais'd his voice,
Loud as the silver trumpet's martial noise,
With hopes of victory his bands to cheer;
It swiftly flew: the distant Spartans hear
With glad surprize. Polytes thus address,
And rous'd the languid valor of the rest.
Myceneans! Spartans! taught to seek renown
From dangers greatly brav'd, and battles won;
With sorrow and regret I see you yield,
And Thebes victorious drive you from the field.
Atrides calls us; to his aid repair:
No foe subdues you but your own despair,
He yet survives, beset with hostile bands,
And, from your valor, present aid demands.
He said. The rigor of the shock returns;
The slaughter rages, and the combat burns.
As when a reaping train their sickles wield,
Where yellow harvest loads some fruitful field;

The master's heart, with secret joy, o'erflows;
He prompts the work, and counts the length'ning
rows;
So 'midst the war, the Pow'r of battles stood,
Pleas'd with the carnage and the streams of blood.

ELPENOR first lay lifeless on the plain,
By stern Plexippus with a jav'lin slain,
A grief to Thebes. Euryalus the bold,
Rich in his flocks and rich in fums of gold,
Beneath the arm of Aristæus fell;
Loud rung his silver arms with echoing knell:
And like some flow'r, whose painted foliage fair
With fragrant breath perfumes the vernal air,
If the rude scythe its tender root invades,
It falls dishonor'd and its lustre fades.
Thus fell Euryalus; whose matchless grace,
In youth's full bloom, surpass'd the human race;
For Cynthius only could with him compare,
In comely features, shape, and flowing hair.

Now o'er the fields the rage of war is spread;
And heaps on heaps ascend the hills of dead.
Ranks meeting ranks oppose with equal rage:
As when the north and stormy south engage,
Beneath their strife the troubled ocean roars;
And rushing waves o'erwhelm the rocky shores;
So rag'd the fight; when, bursting from a crowd
Of thick opposing foes, the princes stood

Between

Between the hosts. And thus th' Etolian lord:
Spartans! behold your valiant chief restor'd;
Ye owe his safety to Minerva's care;
Let hecatombs your gratitude declare;
Soon as from Thebes you reach your native ground,
Where flocks and herds for sacrifice abound;
Now fight and conquer; let this signal day
Your tedious toils, with victory, repay;
And, for Hegialus, let thousands dead
With ample vengeance gratify his shade.
As thus the hero spoke, the warriors heard,
And hope rekindling thro' the host appear'd;
With joyful shouts they rent the trembling air,
And blest'd the gods, and own'd Minerva's care.

Now, tow'ring in the midst, Atrides stood,
And call'd his warriors to the fight aloud:
As mariners with joy the sun descry,
Ascending, in his course, the eastern sky;
Who all night long, by angry tempests tost,
Shun'd with incessant toil some faithless coast;
So to his wishing friends Atrides came;
Their danger such before, their joy the same.
Again the rigor of the shock returns;
The slaughter rages, and the combat burns;
With thirst of vengeance ev'ry bosom glows.
Tydides leads, and rushes on his foes;
Around his head a ray of light'ning shone
From the smooth helmet and the glitt'ring cone;

Like that by night which streams with fiery glare
When some red meteor glides along the air,
Sent by the angry gods, with tainted breath,
To sow the seeds of pestilence and death:
From look to look infectious terror spreads;
And ev'ry wretch th' impending vengeance dreads.

BEFORE the chief the Theban bands retire,
As shepherd swains avoid the lion's ire,
Clytander only, by the fates impell'd,
Oppos'd him single and disdain'd to yield;
Lycaon's son; deceiv'd by glory's charms,
Superior might he brav'd and matchless arms.
Nor was his brother present by his side,
To share the danger and the toil divide;
Himself a youth, and yet by time unsteel'd,
Single, he met Tydides in the field.
Against th' immortal shield his lance he flung,
Whose hollow orb with deaf'ning clangor rung:
The tow'rs of Thebes re-echo'd to the sound;
The spear repuls'd fell blunted on the ground.
Tydides next th' immortal jav'lin threw;
With force impell'd, it brighten'd as it flew;
And pierc'd the Theban helmet near the cone;
Behind his ear the starting weapon shone.
Supine the warrior fell, his spirit fled,
And mix'd with heroes in th'Elysian shade.
To spoil the slain the ardent victor flew:
First from the wound the fixed lance he drew,

The helmet loos'd, the costly mail unbound,
And shining shield with sculptur'd figures crown'd.
These spoils the hero, in his grateful mind,
A present for the gen'rous youth design'd;
Who still in perilous battle sought his side,
And proffer'd late his warlike steeds to guide;
Fatal the gift, the cause of future woe!
But good and ill th' immortals only know.
The armor to a vulgar hand consign'd,
Again the hero, swifter than the wind,
To combat rush'd.

But, from his throne above
Declin'd, the all-surveying eye of Jove
His progress mark'd. The herald pow'r, who brings
His sov'reign mandates on immortal wings,
He thus address'd: To yonder sphere descend;
Bid Phœbus straight his ev'ning charge attend:
For, with reverted eye, he views the war,
And checks the progress of his downward car.
Let him not linger in th' ethereal way,
But lash his steeds, and straight conclude the day;
For, if the gods descend not to her aid,
Or ev'ning interpose with friendly shade,
Thebes now must perish; and the doom of fate,
Anticipated, have an earlier date
Than fate ordains: for, like devouring flame,
Tydides threatens all the Theban name;
Immortal arms his native force improve,
Conferr'd by Pallas, partial in her love.

These to retrieve must be your next essay;
Win them by art, and hither straight convey:
For man with man an equal war shall wage;
Nor with immortal weapons arm his rage.

He said. And Maia's son, with speed, address'd
His flight to Phœbus hov'ring in the west.
Upon a cloud his winged feet he stay'd;
And thus the mandates of his fire convey'd.
Ruler of light! let now thy car descend,
And silent night her peaceful shade extend,
Else Thebes must perish; and the doom of fate,
Anticipated, have an earlier date
Than fate decrees: for, like devouring flame,
Tydides threatens all the Theban name;
Immortal arms his native force improve,
Confer'd by Pallas, partial in her love.

The son of Maia thus. The God obey'd;
The sounding lash upon his steeds he lay'd.
Swift to the goal with winged feet they flew;
The night ascending as the day withdrew.

To Thebes the herald next pursu'd his way;
Shot like a meteor with the setting ray.
Behind Tydides in the fight he stay'd;
And on his head the potent sceptre lay'd:
Whose magic pow'r on waking sense prevails;
Or, in profoundest sleep, the eye unseals;

The

The struggling ghost unbinds from mortal clay,
And drives it down the dark Tartarean way.
Subdu'd the hero stood by pow'rful charms,
Till Hermes stript him of th' immortal arms;
And, mounting to the starry roofs above,
Dispos'd them in the armory of Jove.
And, recollected, thus Tydides spoke:
Whate'er they give, sh' immortals may revoke.
I own their favor; that, of mortal line
The first, I wore a panoply divine.
But if the day were lengthen'd to my will,
With light to point my jav'lin where to kill,
Thebes now should perish; but the morning ray
Shall finish what the ev'ning shades delay.

AND now the night began her silent reign;
Ascending, from the deep, th' ethereal plain,
O'er both the hosts she stretch'd her ample shade,
Their conflict to suspend: the hosts obey'd.
The field no more a noisy scene appears,
With steeds and chariots throng'd and glitt'ring spears;
But still, and silent: like the hoary deep,
When, in their caves, the angry tempests sleep,
Peaceful and smooth it spreads from shore to shore,
Where storms had rag'd and billows swell'd before:
Such seem'd the field; the martial clangors cease;
And war tumultuous lulls itself to peace.

THE
EPIGONIAD.

BOOK IV.

AND now the princes of the Theban state
In council sat, assembled in the gate,
Where rows of marble pillars bound the space,
To judgment sacred in the days of peace.
And Creon thus, with public cares oppress'd
And private griefs, the senators address'd.

PRINCES of Thebes, and valiant aids from far,
Our firm associates in the works of war,
Heroes, attend! I shall not now propose
To supplicate, for peace, our haughty foes;
No peace can grow, no friendship e'er be found,
When mutual hate has torn so wide a wound.
Yet for a truce of seven days space I plead;
And fun'ral obsequies to grace the dead.
Nor were it just, that they, who greatly fall
From rage of foes to guard their native wall,
Should want the honors which their merits claim,
Sepulchral rites deny'd and fun'ral flame.

Thus as he spoke, parental grief suppress'd
 His voice, and swell'd within his lab'ring breast.
 Silent amidst th' assembled peers he stands,
 And wipes his falling tears with trembling hands;
 For great Leophron, once his country's boast,
 The glory and the bulwark of her host,
 Pierc'd by a foe and lifeless on the plain,
 Lay drench'd in gore and mix'd with vulgar slain:
 Silent he stood; the Theban lords around
 His grief partake, in streams of sorrow drown'd;
 Till sage Palantes rose, and to the rest,
 The Monarch seconding, his words address'd.

PRINCES! renown'd for wisdom and for might,
 Rever'd in council and approv'd in fight;
 What Creon moves the laws themselves require,
 With obsequies to grace and fun'ral fire
 Each warrior, who in battle bravely falls
 From rage of foes to guard his native walls:
 If all approve, and none will sure withstand
 What Creon counsels and the laws command,
 Charg'd with the truce, Apollo's priest shall go
 To offer and conclude it with the foe.
 His silver hairs a mild respect may claim,
 And great Apollo's ever honor'd name.

THE rest assent. The venerable man,
 Slow from his seat arising, thus began:
 Princes of Thebes! and thou, whose sov'reign hand
 Sways the dread sceptre of supreme command;

Tho'

Tho' well I might this perilous task refuse,
And plead my feeble age a just excuse;
Yet nothing shall restrain me, for I go;
Pleas'd with the pious charge, to meet the foe;
Willing I go; our bleeding warriors claim
Sepulchral honors and the fun'ral flame.
If all approve, let Clytophon attend;
With just success our labors thus shall end:
For sure no Theban boasts an equal skill,
With pleasing words, to bend the fixed will.

SOOTH'D with the friendly praise, the hero said,
No self-regard shall hold me or dissuade;
The pious charge my inmost thoughts approve:
He said; and slow thro' yielding crowds they move;
While Thebes on ev'ry side assembled stands,
And supplicates the gods with lifted hands:
O grant that wrathful enemies may spare
These rev'rend heads; nor wrong the silver hair!

AND now they pass'd the lofty gates, and came
Where slow Ismenus winds his gentle stream;
Amphion's grove they pass'd, whose umbrage wide
His rural tomb defends on ev'ry side.
The scene of fight they reach'd, and spacious fields
With mangled slaughter heap'd, and spears and shields.
Under their feet the hollow bucklers sound;
And splinter'd faulcons glitter on the ground.
And now the stations of the camp appear,
Far as a shaft can wound the flying deer.

Thither,

Thither, amid the wrecks of war, they go
With silent steps; and scape the watchful foe.
Now full in view before the guards they stand;
The priest displays his ensigns in his hand,
The laurel wreath, the gold bespangled rod
With stars adorn'd, the symbols of the god.

He thus began: ye Argive warriors, hear!
A peaceful message to your tents we bear:
A truce is ask'd, till the revolving sun,
Seven times from east to west his journey run,
Again ascends; and, from the ocean's streams,
Crowns the green mountains with his golden beams:
That mutually secure, with pious care,
Both hosts funereal honors may prepare
For ev'ry hero, whom the rage of fight
Has swept to darkness and the shores of night.

Thus as he spoke, the list'ning warriors heard
With approbation and the priest rever'd.
The chief of Salamis, their leader, went
Himself to guide them to the royal tent;
Which shone conspicuous; thro' the shades of night
Its spacious portal pour'd a stream of light.
Thither conducted by the chief, they found
The king of men with all his peers around.
On thrones with purple spread each royal guest
In order sat, and shar'd the genial feast.
Silent they enter'd. From his chair of state,
Full in the midst oppos'd to the gate,

The

The monarch saw ; and rising thus express
The gen'rous dictates of his royal breast.

My guests, approach ! no enemy is near ;
This roof protects you, straight forget your fear.
Ev'n tho' from yon devoted walls you come,
For vengeance mark'd by fate's eternal doom ;
Here in my tent, with safety, you shall rest,
And with the princes, share the genial feast.
You freely then your message may propose,
When round the board the cheering vintage flows,
Which soothes impatience, and the open'd ear,
With favour and attention, bends to hear.

THE hero thus. Apollo's priest replies :
Humane thy manners, and thy words are wise ;
With thee the noblest gifts the gods have plac'd,
And pow'r supreme with equal wisdom grac'd :
Tho' oft, by parts, for others they ordain,
The arts of sway, the privilege to reign ;
In thee their partial favor has combin'd
The highest fortune with the greatest mind.

As thus the sage reply'd, the princely band
By turns presented each his friendly hand,
The sign of peace. For each a splendid throne,
Where fring'd with gold the purple cov'ring shone,
The ready waiters, by command, prepar'd ;
There sat the envoys and the banquet shar'd,
On ev'ry side the sparkling vintage flows,
The momentary cure of human woes.

The

The rage of thirst and hunger thus suppress'd,
To Nestor turning Clytophon address'd.

ILLUSTRIOUS chief! an honor now I'll claim,
Which not to publish, sure, would merit blame.
Your father's guest I was; by fortune led,
When from Trinacria's desert shores I fled
With ills beset; but, in his friendly land,
His gen'rous heart I prov'd and lib'ral hand.
A grateful mind excites me to reveal
His sov'reign bounty, and attempt a tale
Of dear remembrance. But the fond design,
Prudence dissenting, warns me to decline;
For when to public cares your thoughts you bend,
A private story mingled must offend.

THE artful Theban thus. The chief reply'd,
Whose sov'reign mandates all the host obey'd:
My honor'd guest! proceed; nor aught conceal
Which gratitude enjoins you to reveal:
For gen'rous deeds, imprudently suppress'd,
Lie unapplauded in the grateful breast:
And now the feast, short interval of care,
To vocal symphony unbends the ear;
Or sweet discourse, which to the soul conveys
Sublimier joys than music's tuneful lays.
The monarch thus. The prudent sage suppress'd
His inward joy, and thus the peers address'd:
Each chief he strove to gain, but Nestor most,
Whose wisdom sway'd the councils of the host.

CONFED'RATE kings! and thou whose sov'reign
hand

Sways the dread sceptre of supreme command,
Attend and hearken! since you seek to know
The sad beginnings of a life of woe.
In Rhodes my father once dominion claim'd,
Orsilochus, for deeds of valor fam'd.
The Sporades his sov'reign sceptre own'd,
And Carpathus with waving forests crown'd.
His youngest hope I was, and scarce had seen
The tenth returning summer clothe the green,
When pirates snatch'd me from my native land:
While with my infant equals on the strand
I play'd, of harm secure, and from the deep
With pleasure saw approach the fatal ship;
Pleas'd with the whiteness of the sails we stood,
And the red streamers shining on the flood;
And fearless saw the hostile galley land,
Where from the hills a current seeks the strand.
They climb'd the rocky beach, and far around,
Intent on spoil and rapine, view'd the ground;
If any herd were near or fleecy store,
Or lonely mansion on the winding shore.
My young companions straight their fear obey.
I, bold and unsuspecting, dar'd to stay.
Me straight they seiz'd; and doom'd to servile toil
A wretched captive in a foreign soil.
Struggling in vain, they bore me down the bay,
Where, anchor'd near the beach, their vessel lay;

And

And plac'd me on the deck. With bitter cries,
To speeding gales I saw the canvass rise;
The boundless ocean far before me spread;
And from my reach the shores at distance fled.
All day I wept; but when the setting light
Retir'd, and yielded to the shades of night,
Sleep stole upon my grief with soft surprize,
Which care ne'er banish'd long from infant eyes.

NINE days we sail'd; the tenth returning ray
Show'd us Trinacria rising in our way,
Far in the west; where, with his ev'ning beams,
The sun descending gilds the ocean's streams,
Thither the sailors ply, and blindly run
On hidden dangers which they ought to shun;
For whom the gods distinguish by their hate,
They first confound and then resign to fate.
All day we sail'd; and with the ev'ning hour,
Which calls the shepherd to his rural bow'r,
Approach'd the shore. The forests on the land
We mark'd, and rivers op'ning from the strand.
Then gladness touch'd my heart; the first I knew
Since fate had mix'd me with that lawless crew:
With joy I saw the rising shores appear;
And hop'd to find some kind deliv'rer near;
Some gen'rous lord, to whom I might relate,
Low bending at his knees, my wretched fate,
Vain was the hope; the Cyclopes ne'er know
Compassion, not to melt at human woe.

NEAR

NEAR on the left, and where the parted tides
A promontory's rocky height divides,
A bay they found; and on the fatal strand
Descending, fix'd their vessel to the land.
The valleys straight and mountains they explore,
And the long windings of the desert shore;
And find, of sheep and goats, a mingled flock,
Under the shelter of a cavern'd rock,
The largest and the best the pirate band
Seiz'd, and prepar'd a banquet on the strand.
With joy they feasted; while the goblet, crown'd
With Mithymnean vintage, flow'd around.
Of harm secure they sat; and void of fear
To mirth resign'd; nor knew destruction near.

AMID them there I meditating sat;
Some god inspir'd me, or the pow'r of fate,
To 'scape their hated hands: and soon I found
The wish'd occasion; when along the ground,
Each where he sat, the ruffians lay supine,
With sleep oppress'd and sense-subduing wine;
Softly I rose, and to a lofty grove,
Which shaded all the mountain tops above,
Ascending, in a rocky cavern lay,
Till darkness fled before the morning ray.
Then from above I saw the pirate band,
In parties, roaming o'er the desert strand;
The mountain goats they drove and fleecy store,
From all the pastures, crowded to the shore.

Me

Me too, by name they call'd; and oft, in vain,
 Explor'd each grove and thicket on the plain;
 While from above I saw, with careless eye,
 Them searching round and list'ning for reply.
 Some to the ship the bleating spoil convey'd;
 While others to prepare a banquet stay'd,
 And call'd their mates: to share the full repast
 With mirth they came, nor knew it was their last.

• THEN from the rocky summit where I lay,
 A flock appear'd descending to the bay;
 Which thro' a narrow valley rush'd along,
 Oxen and sheep, an undistinguish'd throng.
 With these the sloping hills were cover'd o'er,
 And the long windings of the sandy shore.
 Behind a Cyclops came; and, by degrees,
 Rose to my view, and tower'd above the trees.
 His giant stature, like a lofty rock,
 Appear'd: and in his hand a knotted oak
 Of tallest growth; around his shoulder hung
 His bag enormous, by a cable hung.
 Panting I lay; as when a lurking deer,
 From some close thicket, sees the hunter near.
 By dread subdu'd, confounded and amaz'd,
 My fixed eye-balls darken'd as I gaz'd.
 Soon from above my wretched mates he knew,
 As on the level shore, in open view,
 They sat secure, with flow'ry garlands crown'd;
 The signs of spoil and ravage scatter'd round.

With

With indignation, for his wasted flock,
Inflam'd, he thus like distant thunder spoke.
Whoe'er these are, who from their native soil
To foreign climates thus, in quest of spoil,
Licentious roam; they soon shall feel my hand,
And rue that e'er they touch'd Trinacria's strand.
As muttering thus, along the craggy road
He came, the mountain trembled as he trode.
The wretches saw with horror and affright;
Each limb enfeebled lost the pow'r of flight.
Their cries in vain the monster mov'd to spare;
His club he rear'd and swung it thrice in air,
Then hurl'd it cross the bay: it swiftly drove
O'er the smooth deep, and raz'd the beach above.
Threat'ning it rush'd along; but, bending low,
Each, where he sat, escap'd the weighty blow.
Beyond them far it pitch'd upon the land,
Tore the green sward, and heav'd a mount of sand.
Now starting from the ground they strove to fly,
Press'd by despair and strong necessity;
The woody summits of the cliffs to gain,
With fault'ring haste they fled across the plain.
But the impending mountains barr'd their flight,
High and projecting from their airy height;
Back from the slipp'ry arch, in heaps, they fall;
And with imploring cries for mercy call,
In vain. The monster with gigantic strides,
At twenty steps, the spacious bay divides;
Around his knees the whit'ning billows roar,
And his rude voice like thunder shakes the shore.

THERE

THERE thirty youths he flew; against the stones
 And ragged cliffs, he dash'd their crackling bones.
 Twenty his feet and heavy hands pursue,
 As to the ocean in despair they flew;
 Striving the summit of the beach to gain,
 With headlong course to rush into the main:
 For there they hop'd a milder fate to have,
 And less abhor'd, beneath the whelming wave.
 These too he reach'd; and, with his weighty hand,
 Their flight oppress'd, and mix'd them with the sand.
 Two yet surviv'd; who supplicating strove,
 With humble suit, his barb'rous soul to move.
 With trembling knees the sandy beach they press'd;
 And, as he came, the monster thus address'd.

O THOU! with whom no mortal can compare
 For strength resistless, pity now and spare.
 O let the blood, already shed, atone
 For our provoking guilt, and trespass done!
 O spare and pity! sure, the gods above,
 Who sit around the starry throne of Jove,
 Are won by pray'r; and he whose matchless might
 The solid earth sustains and starry height,
 Oft spares the guilty; for his soul approves
 Compassion, and the works of mercy loves.
 Let sov'reign pity touch thy mighty breast;
 And him revere, the greatest and the best;
 Who pardons oft, but measures grief and pain
 To such as hear the wretched plead in vain.

As

As thus to touch his iron heart they try'd,
The Cyclops smiling, scornful thus reply'd:
The praise of mercy well your words proclaim;
And vengeance mark, tho' merited, with blame.
Well have you spoken; therefore, from my hand,
More favor hope than any of your band;
They, on the desert shore expos'd and bare,
The wolves shall feast and ev'ry bird of air;
But ye, prefer'd above the rest, shall have
This body for your monument and grave.

He said, and seizing lifts them both on high,
With hands and feet extended in the sky:
Then dash'd them thrice against the rocky shore;
Gnaw'd their warm flesh, and drank their streaming
gore.

Oft have I seen the havoc of the plain,
The rage of tempests and the stormy main;
But fate, in such a form, ne'er met my eyes,
And, while I speak, afresh its horrors rise
To chill my veins: nor can the vary'd state
Of sprightly youth, and middle age sedate,
Or life's last stage with all its griefs oppress,
Banish the dire impression from my breast.
For still I see the monster, as he stood,
His hairy visage dy'd in human blood:
As the grim lion leaves the wasted plains,
Red from the ravage of the flocks and swains.

With

With vengeance pleas'd he view'd the shores
around;
And, riding near the beach, our vessel found:
Her by the mast he seiz'd; and to the land,
With all her anchors, dragg'd along the strand.
Exploring, next the solid deck he tore,
And found, conceal'd below, his fleecy store.
With scornful smiles he saw the theft bewray'd;
And sidelong on the beach the galley laid;
And call'd his flock: to open light they strain,
Through the wide beach, and crowd upon the plain:
Still, as they pass'd, his weighty hands he laid
On their soft backs, and, stroaking gently, said:
Go now, my flock! enjoy the verdant hills,
The rivers cool, the sweet refreshing rills,
The meads and shady forests, safe from harm;
Your foes lie crush'd beneath your master's arm.
The giant thus; and next the hold explor'd:
Four jars he found with Lesbian vintage stor'd.
These first he drain'd; then to his lips apply'd
His flute, which like a quiver by his side,
Of size enormous, hung. Its hollow sound
The woods repeated and the caves around.
Its music such, as when a stormy gale
Roars thro' a hollow cliff with hideous peal,
Resounding deep, along the level shore:
He play'd, and drove his past'ring flock before.

HORROR and grief at once my heart assail'd;
Presages sad o'er ev'ry hope prevail'd.

My

My distant country rush'd upon my mind ;
 My friends, my weeping parents, left behind.
 Now lost to hope, and furious from despair,
 With both my hands I rent my rooted hair ;
 And, in an agony of sorrow, prest
 With strokes repeated oft, my heaving breast.
 All day I mourn'd ; but when the setting ray
 Retir'd, and ev'ning shades expel'd the day ;
 Encourag'd by the night, I sought the plain ;
 And, wand'ring anxious 'midst the mangled slain,
 Oft call'd, to know if any of the band
 Did yet survive, escap'd the monster's hand :
 But none reply'd. Along the desert shore
 All night I wander'd, 'midst the sullen roar
 Of bursting billows ; till the morning ray
 Appear'd to light my solitary way.
 'Twas then I reach'd a mountain's height, o'erspread
 With thickets close, and dark impending shade,
 Hung o'er a valley, where a river leads
 His wand'ring current thro' a grove of reeds.

THITHER I went ; and, op'ning to the deep,
 A cavern found beneath the rocky steep ;
 The haunt of mountain goats, when wint'ry rains
 Have chac'd them from the hills and naked plains.
 Gladly I enter'd ; for, deceiv'd by fear,
 I always thought the barb'rous Cyclops near ;
 His form descri'd in ev'ry tree behind,
 And heard his voice approaching in the wind.

Of honey there a sweet repast I found,
 In clusters hanging from the cliffs around.
 My hunger soon appeas'd, the gentle pow'r
 Of sleep subdu'd me till the ev'ning hour.
 'Twas then I wak'd; and to the deep below,
 Thro' thickets, creep'd with careful steps and slow;
 And gaz'd around if any hut were there,
 Or solitary wretch my grief to share:
 But none appear'd. I climb'd a mountain's head,
 Where, wide before me, lay the ocean spread;
 And there no object met my wishing eyes,
 But billows bounded by the setting skies.
 Yet still I gaz'd, till night's prevailing sway
 Extinguish'd, in the west, the ev'ning ray.
 Hopeless and sad, descending from my stand,
 I wander'd on the solitary strand,
 Thro' the thick gloom; and heard the fullen roar
 Of billows bursting on the desert shore.

Thus ten long years I liv'd, conceal'd by day,
 Under a rock on wither'd leaves I lay;
 At dawn and twilight on the mountains stood,
 Exploring with my eyes the pathless flood;
 Impatient till some friendly sail should come,
 To waft me to my fire and native home:
 But none appear'd. The pilots shun the shores
 Where *Ætna* flames, and dire *Charybdis* roars;
 And where the curs'd Cyclopean brothers reign,
 The lonely-tyrants of the desert plain.

Press'd

Prefs'd by despair, at last I dar'd to brave,
Even in a skiff, the terrors of the wave;
Contemning all the perils in my way,
For worse it seem'd than death itself to stay.

OF oziars soft the bending hull I wove;
And ply'd the skins of mountain goats above.
A slender fir, ten cubit lengths, I found
Fall'n from a mould'ring bank, and stript it round.
This for the mast, with bulrush ropes I ty'd;
A pole to steer the rudder's use supply'd:
Four goat-skins join'd I fitted for the sail,
And spread it with a pole to catch the gale.
Each chink with gum, against the brine, I clos'd:
And the whole work beneath a shade dispos'd,
Where, from the hills descending to the main,
A winding current cuts the sandy plain.
Nuts and dry'd figs in baskets next I shar'd;
And liquid stores in bags of skin prepar'd:
And waited anxious till the southern gale,
From the dire coast, should bear my flying sail.
Nine days I stay'd; and still the northern breeze,
From great Hesperia, swept the whit'ning seas:
But on the tenth it chang'd; and, when the hour
Of twilight call'd the giant to his bow'r,
Down from my grotto to the shore I came,
And call'd the God who rules the ocean's stream;
Oblations vow'd, if, by his mighty hand
Conducted safe, I found my native land.
And, turning where conceal'd my vessel lay,
The rope I loos'd, and push'd her to the bay;

The sail unfurl'd, and, steering from the strand,
Behind me left with joy the hated land.

ALL night, by breezes sped, the prow divides
The deep, and o'er the billows lightly glides.
But when the dawn, prevailing o'er the night,
Had ting'd the glowing east with purple light,
The air was hush'd: deserted by the gale,
Loose to the mast descends the empty sail.
And full against my course a current came,
Which hurl'd me backwards, floating on its stream,
Towards the land. I saw the shores draw near;
And the long billows on the beach appear.
The cruel Cyclops spy'd me, as he drove
His past'ring flock along the hills above;
And winding thro' the groves his secret way,
Conceal'd behind a promontory lay;
Prepar'd to snatch me, when his arm could reach
My skiff, which drove ungovern'd to the beach.
I mark'd his purpose; furious from despair,
With both my hands I rent my rooted hair;
And on the poop with desp'rate purpose stood,
Prepar'd to plunge into the whelming flood.
But Neptune sav'd me in that perilous hour;
The headlong current felt his present pow'r:
Back from the shore it turn'd, at his command,
And bore me joyful from the fatal strand.
The Cyclops vex'd; as when some fowler spies,
Safe from his cover'd snares, the quarry rise:
His seat forsook, and, leaning o'er the steep,
Strove with soft words to lure me from the deep.

Stranger,

Stranger, approach ! nor fly this friendly strand ;
Share the free blessings of a happy land :
Here, from each cliff, a stream of honey flows ;
And ev'ry hill with purple vintage glows.
Approach ; your fear forget ; my bounty share ;
My kindness prove and hospitable care.
As to allure me thus the monster try'd,
His fraud I knew ; and rashly thus reply'd :
Talk not of friendship ; well I know the doom
Of such as to your dire dominions come.
These eyes beheld when, with a ruthless hand,
My wretched mates you murder'd on the strand.
Two su'd for mercy ; but their limbs you tore
With brutal rage, and drank their streaming gore.
If heav'n's dread Sov'reign to my vengeful hand
His wasting flames would yield, and forked brand,
Scorch'd on the cliffs, your giant limbs should feed
The mountain wolves, and all the rav'nous breed.

I SAID ; and from the south a rising breeze
Brush'd the thick woods, and swept the curling seas.
Above the waves my vessel lightly flew ;
The ocean widen'd, and the shores withdrew.
Inrag'd the Cyclops, rushing down the steep,
Eager to snatch me, plung'd into the deep :
My flight he follow'd with gigantic strides,
And stem'd with both his knees the rushing tides.
Soon had I perish'd, but escap'd again,
Protected by the God who rules the main.

He sent a spectre from his wat'ry caves;
Like mist it rose and hover'd o'er the waves.
A skiff like mine, by art divine, it grew;
And to the left across the ocean flew.
With course divided, where the pilot spies
Amid the deep two desert islands rise,
In shape like altars, so by sailors nam'd,
A mark for pilots, else for nothing fam'd;
The angry giant doubting stood, nor knew
Which to forsake, the shadow or the true:
For both seem'd equal. By the fates misled,
He chac'd the airy image as it fled;
Nor reach'd it: for it led him thro' the main,
As the bright rainbow mocks some simple swain;
Who still intent to catch it where it stands,
And grasp the shining meteor with his hands,
Along the dewy meadows holds his way;
But still before him flies the coloured ray.
The Cyclops so, along the wat'ry plain,
The shadowy phantom chac'd and chac'd in vain:
The billows burst'd on his hairy sides,
And far behind him rush'd the parted tides.
Dissolv'd at last, its airy structure broke,
And vanish'd hov'ring like a cloud of smoke.
His error then, and my escape, he knew;
For, favour'd by the breeze, my vessel flew
Far to the deep: yet plunging in the waves,
Torn from its bed a pond'rous rock he heaves,
Craggy and black, with dangling sea-weed hung;
Push'd from his hand the weighty mass he flung,

To crush my flight; along th' ethereal plain;
It roll'd, and thund'ring downwards shook the main.
Behind it fell; and farther from the shore,
Hurl'd on the mounting waves, my vessel bore
Towards the deep. The giant saw, with pain,
His fraud detected, force essay'd in vain.
He curs'd the partial pow'rs, and lash'd on high,
With both his hands, the ocean to the sky.

Now safe beyond his reach, a prosp'rous gale
Blew fresh behind, and stretch'd my flying sail:
The shores retir'd; but, from the distant main,
I saw him tow'ring on the wat'ry plain,
Like a tall ship; and moving to the shore,
Sullen and sad, to tend his fleecy store.
Seven days I sail'd; the eighth returning light
The Pylian shores presented to my sight,
Far in the east; and where the sun displays,
Along the glitt'ring waves, his early rays.
Thither I steer'd, and, where a point divides
Extended in the deep, the parted tides,
A fane I mark'd; whose tow'ring summit, rear'd
High in the air, with gilded spires appear'd.
To Neptune sacred on the beach it stands,
Conspicuous from the sea and distant lands.
Assembled on the shore the people stood
On ev'ry side extended, like a wood:
And in the midst I saw a pillar rise,
Of sacred smoke, ascending to the skies.

¶ D 4 ¶ 'Twas

'Twas there I reach'd the hospitable strand,
And, joyful, fix'd my vessel to the land.

THERE, with his peers, your royal fire I found;
And fell before him prostrate on the ground,
Imploring aid; my lineage I reveal'd,
Nor aught of all my tedious toils conceal'd.
Attentive, as I spoke, the hero heard,
Nor credulous nor diffident appear'd;
For prudence taught him, neither to receive
With easy faith, or rashly disbelieve.

O son of Neleus! tho' you justly claim,
For eloquence and skill, superior fame;
Yet to an equal glory ne'er aspire:
Vain were the hope to emulate your fire.
Eight days we feasted: still the flowing bowl
Return'd, and sweet discourse, to glad the soul,
With pleasure heard; as comes the sound of rain,
In summer's drought, to cheer the careful swain.
And when the ninth returning morn arose,
Sixty bold mariners the hero chose,
Skill'd, thro' the deep, the flying keel to guide,
And sweep, with equal oars, the hoary tide:
They trimm'd a vessel, by their lord's command,
To waft me to my fire and native land.
With gifts enrich'd of robes and precious ore,
He sent me joyful from the Pylian shore.
Such Neleus was! and such his matchless praise
For hospitable deeds in former days;
The friend, the patron, destin'd to redress
The wrongs of fate, and comfort my distress.

BUT

BUT what is man! a reptile of the earth;
To toils successive fated from his birth;
Few are our joys; in long succession flow
Our griefs; we number all our days in woe.
Misfortune enter'd with my infant years;
My feeble age a load of sorrow bears.
Driv'n from my country by domestic foes,
Thebes but receiv'd me to partake her woes.
The sword I've seen and wide devouring fire,
Against her twice in fatal league conspire,
The public griefs, which ev'ry heart must share,
By nature taught to feel another's care,
Augment my own: our matrons weeping stand;
Our rev'rend elders mourn a ruin'd land;
Their furrow'd cheeks with streams of sorrow flow;
And wailing orphans swell the gen'ral woe;
They mourn their dearest hopes, in battle slain,
Whose limbs unbury'd load their native plain;
And now by us entreat that war may cease,
And, for seven days successive, yield to peace:
That mutually secure, with pious care,
Both hosts funereal honors may prepare
For ev'ry warrior, whom the rage of fight
Has swept to darkness and the coasts of night,
To ratify the truce, if ye approve,
We come alike commission'd, as to move.

THUS Clytophon; and he, whose sov'reign sway
The warriors of the Pylian race obey,

D 5

Nestor,

Nestor, his partial favor thus express'd;
And to the Theban chief himself address'd.
The truth you speak, nor do your words appear
Prepar'd with art, or dictated by fear;
For what you tell, my memory recalls,
When young I saw you at my native walls,
Yourself a youth; tho' now a length of years,
Imprinted deep, in all your form appears;
Yet still, with sure remembrance, can I trace
Your voice the same and lineaments of face.
An infant then upon your knees I hung,
And catch'd the pleasing wonders from your tongue:
Your woes I pity'd, as I pity still;
And, were the chiefs determin'd by my will,
The truce should stand: for piety conspires
With justice, to demand what Thebes requires.

THE hero thus; the king of men replies:
Princes, in fight approv'd, in council wise!
What Thebes propounds 'tis yours alone to chuse
Whether ye will accept it or refuse:
For tho' your votes consenting, in my hand
Have plac'd the sceptre of supreme command;
Yet still my pow'r, obedient to your choice,
Shall with its sanction join the public voice.

THE monarch thus; and thus the chief reply'd,
Whom fair Etolia's martial sons obey'd:
Princes, attend! and thou, whose sov'reign hand
Sways the dread sceptre of supreme command!

What

What Thebes requires I do not now oppose,
Because, insensible to human woes,
The widow's tears I scorn, the mother's sighs,
The groans of fathers, or the orphans cries,
Whose dearest hopes, in rage of battle slain,
With wounds defac'd, lie scatter'd on the plain:
Compassion for the host, which fruitless toil
So long has wasted in a foreign soil,
What Thebes propounds, impels me to dissuade,
And, for the living, disregard the dead.
How long has war and famine thin'd our pow'rs,
Inactive camp'd around the Theban tow'rs?
And pestilence, whose dire infection flies,
Blown by the furies thro' the tainted skies?
Many now wander on the Stygian shore,
Whom fires and consorts shall behold no more;
And many still, who yet enjoy the day,
Must follow down the dark Tartarean way,
If, blinded by the fates, our counsels bar
The course of conquest and protract the war,
Since equity and public right demands
That Thebes should fall by our avenging hands,
Now let us combat, till the gods above,
Who sit around the starry throne of Jove,
The judges of the nations, crown our toil,
So long endur'd, with victory and spoil;
Or, destine us to fall in glorious fight,
Elate and dauntless in the cause of right.
Shall we delay till dire infection spreads
Her raven wings o'er our devoted heads?

Till gen'rous wrath, by slow disease suppress'd,
Expires inactive in the warrior's breast,
And life, the price of glory, paid in vain,
We die forgotten on a foreign plain.

TYRIDES thus; and he, whose sovereign sway
The warriors of the Pylian race obey,
Nestor reply'd, for eloquence approv'd,
By Pallas and the tuneful sisters lov'd:
Confed'rate kings! and thou, whose sov'reign hand
Sways the dread sceptre of supreme command,
With patience hear the reasons which I plead
For fun'ral rites, the honors of the dead.
Well have you heard the various ills that wait
On strife prolong'd, and war's disastrous state:
And they, who choose to dwell amid alarms,
The rage of slaughter and the din of arms,
Know little of the joys, when combats cease,
That crown with milder bliss the hours of peace.
Tho' gladly would I see, in vengeance just,
The Theban tow'rs confounded with the dust;
That from the war releas'd, we might again
Each share the pleasures of his native reign:
Yet let us not presumptuously withstand
What piety alike and right command,
The honors of the dead; nor tempt the gods,
To curse our labors, from their bright abodes:
Far in the heav'ns, above this mortal scene,
In boundless light, the Thund'rer sits serene;

He

He views the works of men; the good he knows,
And on their just attempts success bestows;
But blasts impiety, and mocks its aim,
With disappointment sure, and lasting shame.

ATTEND, ye princes! and I shall unfold
What sage Harmodius taught my sire of old.
The Locri summon'd all their martial pow'rs,
And fought around the Orchomenian tow'rs.
From oxen seiz'd, began the dire debate;
And wide and wasteful was the work of fate.
The Orchomenians oft a truce propos'd
For fun'ral rites; the Locrian chiefs oppos'd.
Nine days expir'd, the bleeding warriors lay;
Their wounds hot streaming to the solar ray.
From Styx's sable shore their ghosts implor'd,
With suppliant cries, hell's dread avenging lord.
He heard, and from the gloomy deep below
Of Erebus profound, the house of woe,
A fury sent, the fiercest of the crew,
Whose iron scourges human crimes pursue:
Discord her name; among th' infernal gods
She dwells, excluded from the blest abodes;
Tho' oft on earth she rears her baleful head,
To kindle strife, and make the nations bleed.
The fury came; and, hov'ring o'er the plain,
Devoted with her eyes the Locrian train.
In form a raven, to a tow'r she flew,
Which rose upon a precipice in view,
And on the airy summit took her seat,
With potent charms, to kindle dire debate.

The

The howling dogs her presence first declare;
The war-horse trembling snorts aloft in air;
On man at last the dire infection fell,
The awful vengeance of the pow'rs of hell.
Confusion straight thro' all the camp is found;
The wand'ring centinel deserts his ground,
Fatally gay and crown'd with ev'ry weed,
Which weeping matrons scatter o'er the dead;
Of dire portent: but when the silent reign
Of night possess'd the mountains and the plain,
Above the camp her torch the fury rear'd,
Red, in the air, its baleful flame appear'd,
Kindling debate: outrageous strife arose,
Loud as the ocean when a tempest blows,
O'er all the plain, and stun'd the ear of night
With shouts tumultuous and the din of fight.
Down from her airy stand the Goddess came,
Shot like a meteor, with a stream of flame,
To kindle fiercer strife, with stronger charms,
To swell the tumult and the rage of arms.
The combat burn'd; the Orchomenians heard
With horror, nor beyond their walls appear'd,
By awe divine restrain'd: but when the light
Return'd successive on the steps of night,
From ev'ry tow'r they saw the spacious plain
With havoc heap'd, and mountains of the slain.
The secret cause the augurs first declar'd;
The justice of the gods they own'd and fear'd.
No fun'ral rite the Orchomenian state
On them bestow'd, the vulgar or the great;

In one deep pit, whose mouth extended wide
Four hundred cubit length from side to side,
They whelm'd them all; their bucklers and their
spears,

The steeds, the chariots, and the charioteers,
One ruin mix'd; for so the will of Jove
The priests declar'd; and heap'd a mount above:
Such was the fate, by heav'n and hell decreed,
To punish bold contemners of the dead.
And let not us their fatal wrath provoke,
Nor merit by our guilt an equal stroke;
But seal the truce, and piously bestow
What to the reliques of the dead we owe.

He said; the peers their joint assent declare,
The dead to honor, and the gods revere.
The king of men commands a herald straight
The priests to call, and hasten ev'ry rite.
While thus the sov'reign mandate they obey'd,
Th' Etolian leader rose, and frowning said:

O BLIND to truth! and fated to sustain
A length of woes, and tedious toils in vain!
By sounds deceiv'd, as to her fatal den
Some vocal forc'rels lures the steps of men;
O eloquence! thou fatal charm! how few,
Guided by thee, their real good pursue!
By thee, our minds, with magic fetters bound,
In all decisions, true and false confound.
Not the unnumber'd wrecks, which lie along
The Syrens' coast the trophies of their song,

Nor

Nor there where Circe from the neighb'ring deep,
With strong enchantments, draws the passing ship,
Can match thy spoils: O let me ne'er obey,
And follow blindly, as you point the way!
Confed'rate kings! since nothing can oppose
The truce you purpose with our treach'rous foes,
With mischief pregnant; I alone am free,
Nor these my eyes the fatal rite shall see;
Lest it be said, when mischief shall succeed,
Tydides saw it, and approv'd the deed.

SPEAKING he grasp'd his spear and pond'rous
shield;

And mov'd like Mars, when, 'midst th' imbattel'd field,
Sublime he stalks to kindle fierce alarms,
To swell the tumult and the rage of arms.
Such seem'd the chief: the princes with surprize
Turn'd on the king of men, at once their eyes.

He thus began: Since now the public choice
The truce approves, with one consenting voice;
Tydides only, with superior pride,
Tho' youngest, still the readiest to decide,
Our gen'ral sense condemns; his haughty soul
Must not the counsels of the host control,
Brave tho' he is: the altars ready stand;
In order waits the consecrated band;
Straight let us seal the truce with blood and wine,
And, to attest it, call the pow'rs divine.

THE monarch thus; Tydides to his tent;
 Thro' the still host, in fullen sorrow went;
 Fix'd in his mind the fatal vision stay'd,
 Snatch'd by invading force his lovely maid;
 The fraud of Cytherea; still his heart
 Incessant anguish felt, and lasting smart:
 And, as a lion, when his side retains
 A barbed shaft, the cause of bitter pains,
 Growls in some lonely shade; his friends declin'd,
 He breath'd in groans the anguish of his mind.

Now round the flaming hearth th' assembly stands
 And Theseus thus invokes with lifted hands:
 Hear me, ye pow'rs, that rule the realms of light!
 And ye dread sov'reigns of the shades of night!
 If, till the eighth succeeding sun displays,
 Above the eastern hills, his early rays,
 Any bold warrior of the Argive bands,
 Against a Theban lifts his hostile hands
 By us approv'd; let ev'ry curse succeed
 On me, and all, for perjury decreed.
 And as by blood our mutual oath we seal,
 The blood of victims drawn by deathful steel;
 So let their blood be shed, who, scorning right,
 Profanely shall presume its ties to slight.
 Apollo's priest, for Thebes, resum'd the vow,
 The gods above, invoking, and below,
 Their vengeance to inflict, if force, or art,
 The truce should violate on either part.

THE rites concluded thus, the king commands
Two younger warriors of his native bands
A chariot to prepare; the driver's place
Sophronimus assum'd; with tardy pace,
Ascend the sage ambassadors; before
A lighted torch Afteropæus bore,
And led the way; the tents, the field of war,
They pass'd, and at the gate dismiss'd the car.

THE
EPIGONIAD.

BOOK V.

SOON-as the sun display'd his orient ray,
And crown'd the mountain tops with early day;
Thro' ev'ry gate the Theban warriors flow,
Unarm'd and fearless of th' invading foe:
As when, in early spring, the shepherd sees
Rush from some hollow rock a stream of bees,
Long in the cliffs, from winter's rage conceal'd,
New to the light, and strangers to the field;
In compass wide their mazy flight they steer,
Which wings of balmy zephyrs lightly bear
Along the meads, where some soft river flows,
Or forests, where the flow'ry hawthorn blows;
To taste the early spring their course they bend,
And lightly with the genial breeze descend:
So o'er the heights and plains the Thebans spread;
Some, 'midst the heaps of slaughter, sought their dead;
Others with axes to the woods repair'd,
Fell'd the thick forests, and the mountains bar'd.

WITH

WITH like intent the Argive warriors mov'd,
 By Theseus led, whom virgin Pallas lov'd.
 Ten thousand oxen drew the harness'd wains,
 In droves collected from the neighb'ring plains;
 Slow up the mountains move the heavy wheels,
 The steep ascent each groaning axle feels:
 In ev'ry grove the temper'd axes found;
 The thick trees crackle, and the caves resound.
 Now to the plain the moving woods descend,
 Under their weight a thousand axles bend:
 And round the camp, and round the Theban walls,
 Heaps roll'd on heaps, the mingled forest falls.

OF this the Spartan chief, his native bands,
 With speed to rear a lofty pile, commands;
 Which for Hegialus, with grateful mind,
 Adrastus' valiant son, the chief design'd;
 Who to his aid, when ev'ry warrior fled,
 Repair'd, and for his rescue greatly bled.
 His native bands the hero thus address;
 While sighs incessant labor'd from his breast.

THE chief of Argos, warriors! first demands
 Funereal honors from our grateful hands;
 For him this lofty structure is decreed,
 And ev'ry rite in order shall succeed:
 His dear remains in my pavilion rest;
 Nor can Adrastus at the rites assist;
 Who to despair and phrenzy has resign'd,
 By age and grief subdu'd, his generous mind:

The

The other princes of the army wait
The obsequies to grace, with mournful state.

He said; and to his tent the warriors led,
Where stood already deck'd the fun'ral bed:
With Syrian oil bedew'd, the corse they found
Fresh from the bath, and breathing fragrance round:
For Menelaus, with divided care,
Each rite domestic half'ned to prepare.
Twelve princes to the pile the corse sustain'd;
The head on Agamemnon's hand reclin'd;
With mournful pomp the slow procession mov'd;
For all the hero honor'd and approv'd.

First on the top th' fun'ral bed they place;
And next, the sad solemnity to grace,
And gratify the manes of the slain,
The blood of steeds and bullocks drench'd the plain.
The four fair steeds which drew the rapid car,
That bore the hero thro' the ranks of war,
Their lofty necks the pointed faulcion tore,
With force impell'd, and drew a stream of gore:
Three groaning fell; but, fiercer from the stroke,
The silver reins the fourth with fury broke,
And fled around the field: his snowy chest,
Was dash'd with streaming blood, and lofty crest.
In circles still he wheel'd! at ev'ry round,
Still nearer to the pile himself he found;
Till drain'd of life, by blood alone supply'd,
Just where he felt the blow, he sunk, and dy'd.

By awe divine subdu'd, the warriors stand;
 And silent wonder fixes ev'ry band:
 Till thus Atrides: Sure th' immortal gods,
 The glorious synod of the blest abodes,
 Approve our rites; the good their favor share,
 In death and life the objects of their care.

ATRIDES thus: and, further to augment
 The mournful pomp, the martial Goddeſs went
 Thro' all the camp, in Merion's form expreſs'd;
 And thus aloud the public ear addreſs'd:
 Warriors and friends! on yonder lofty pyre,
 Hegialus expects the fun'ral fire:
 For ſuch high merit, public tears ſhould flow;
 And Greece aſſembled pour a flood of woe.
 Now let us all his obſequies attend;
 And, with the mournful rites, our ſorrows blend.
 Proclaiming thus aloud the Goddeſs went;
 The army heard; and each forſakes his tent;
 Her voice had touch'd their hearts; they mov'd along,
 Nations and tribes, an undiſtinguiſh'd throng.
 Around the pile the wid'ning circle grows;
 As, ſpreading, in ſome valt, a deluge flows,
 By mountain torrents fed, which ſtretches wide,
 And floats the level lands on ev'ry ſide.
 Diſtinguiſh'd in the miſt the princes ſtand,
 With ſcepters grac'd, the enſigns of command:
 Atrides, with ſuperior grief oppreſs'd,
 Thus to the fire of gods his pray'r addreſs'd;

DREAD sov'reign, hear! whose unresisted sway
The fates of men and mortal things obey:
From thee the virtue of the hero springs;
Thine is the glory and the pow'r of kings.
If e'er by thee, and virgin Pallas, led,
To noble deeds this gen'rous youth was bred:
If love to men, or piety, possest,
With highest purpose, his undaunted breast;
Command the winds in bolder gusts to rise,
And bear the flames, I kindle, to the skies.

THE hero thus; and with the fun'ral brand
The structure touch'd; ascending from his hand,
Spreads the quick blaze: the ruler of the sky
Commands; at once the willing tempests fly:
Rushing in streams invisible, they came,
Drove the light smoke, and rais'd the sheeted flame,
The favor of the gods the nations own,
And, with their joint applause, the hero crown.
From morn till noon the roaring flames aspire,
And fat of victims added feeds the fire;
Then fall their lofty spires, and, sinking low,
O'er the pale ashes tremulously glow.
With wine, the smoke, and burning embers lay'd;
The bones they glean'd, and to a tomb convey'd
Under an oak, which, near the public way,
Invites the swains to shun the noontide ray.

Now twenty warriors of Atrides' train,
Loaded with treasure, brought a harness'd wain;

Vases

Vases and tripods in bright order plac'd,
 And splendid arms with fair devices grac'd:
 These for the games the Spartan chief decreed,
 The fun'ral games in honor of the dead.
 Amid the princes first a polish'd yew,
 Unbent upon the ground the hero threw,
 Of work divine; which Cynthus claim'd before,
 And Chiron next upon the mountains bore;
 His sire the third receiv'd it: now it lies,
 For him who farthest shoots, the destin'd prize.

HEROES, approach! Atrides thus aloud,
 Stand forth, distinguish'd from the circling crowd,
 Ye who, by skill or manly force, may claim
 Your rivals to surpass and merit fame.
 This bow, worth twenty oxen, is decreed
 For him who farthest sends the winged reed:
 This bowl, worth eight, shall be reserv'd to grace
 The man whose merit holds the second place.
 He spoke. His words the bold Ajaces fir'd;
 Crete's valiant monarch to the prize aspir'd;
 Teucer for shooting fam'd; and Merion strong,
 Whose force enormous drag'd a bull along;
 Prompt to contend, and rais'd with hope, they stood;
 Laertes' son the last forsook the crowd.
 Tydides too had join'd them, and obtain'd
 Whatever could by skill or force be gain'd;
 But in his tent, indulging sad despair,
 He sat, subdu'd by heart-consuming care.

STRAIGHT in a casque the equal lots were thrown;
 Each hero with his name had mark'd his own:

These

These, mix'd with care, the chief of Sparta drew;
Idomenæus's the first he knew:

Teucer, with hope inspir'd, the second claim'd;
The third Oileus, much for shooting fam'd:

Next claim'd the wearer of the seven-fold shield,
Tho' young in arms, distinguish'd in the field:

Ulysses! thine came next; and, last of all,
Bold Merion with a smile receiv'd his ball.

PRESS'D with incumbent force, the Cretan lord
Strain'd the stiff bow, and bent it to the cord;

Then, from the full stor'd quiver, chose with art,
Wing'd for th' aerial flight, a pointed dart.

Theseus commands the warriors to divide,
Who crowded thick and press'd on ev'ry side;

Straight they retire; as, at the word of Jove,
From day's bright face the scattering clouds remove;

And thro' the host appear'd a spacious way,
Where woods and fields in distant prospect lay.

With force immense, the Cretan monarch drew,
Stretch'd the tough cord, and strain'd the circling

yew;
From his firm gripe the starting arrow sprung,

The stiff bow crack'd, the twanging cordage sung.
Up the light air the hissing weapon flies,

Pierces the winds, and streams along the skies:
Far to the distant plain it swiftly drove;

The host stood wond'ring as it rush'd above:
Descending there upon a mount it stood;

A depth of soil receiv'd the trembling wood.

Applause from all, tumultuous shouts declare,
By echoes wafted thro' the trembling air.
Such joy the hero feels, as praise inspires,
And to the circle of the kings retires.

THE valiant Teucer next receiv'd the bow,
And to Apollo thus address'd a vow :
Hear me, dread king ! whose unresisted sway
Controls the sun, and rules the course of day ;
Great patron of the bow ! this shaft impell ;
And hecatombs my gratitude shall tell ;
Soon as to Salamis our martial pow'rs
Return, victorious, from the Theban tow'rs.
He said, and bid the winged arrow fly ;
It pierc'd the winds, and swept a length of sky ;
In compass, like the coloured arch, which shines
Exalted, as the setting sun declines ;
From north to south it marks th' ethereal space,
And woods and mountains fill its wide embrace :
Beyond the Cretan shaft, it reach'd the plain ;
As far before, as now a shepherd swain,
Hurl'd from a sling, the sounding flint can throw,
From his young charge, to drive the deadly crow.

OILEAN Ajax next the weapon claim'd,
For skill above the rest, and practice fam'd ;
But Phœbus, chief and patron of the art,
Retarded in its flight the winged dart :
For, nor by pray'rs, nor holy vows, he strove,
Of grateful sacrifice, the God to move.

Down-

Downwards he turn'd it, where a cedar fair
 Had shot its spiring top aloft in air;
 Caught in a bough the quiv'ring weapon stood,
 Nor forc'd a passage thro' the closing wood.

AJAX the next appear'd upon the plain,
 With strength untaught, and emulous in vain;
 With finewy arms the solid yew he bends;
 Near and more near approach the doubling ends:
 The arrow sprung; but erring took its way,
 Far to the left, where oozy marshes lay,
 And groves of reeds; where slow Ismenus strays,
 And winds, thro' thickets green, his wat'ry mazes
 Abash'd the youth, with painful steps, retires;
 And now Ulysses to the prize aspires.

In silence thus the prudent warrior pray'd,
 And, in his heart, address'd the martial maid:
 Great queen of arts! on thee my hopes depend;
 With favor, to thy suppliant's suit, attend!
 By thee my infant arms were taught to throw
 The dart with certain aim, and bend the bow:
 Oft on my little hands, immortal maid!
 To guide the shaft, thy mighty hands were laid:
 Now, Goddess, aid me, while I strive for fame;
 Wing the swift weapon, and assert my claim.
 He pray'd: the Goddess, at his suit, descends;
 And present from th' Olympian courts attends.
 With force divine his manly limbs she strung,
 The bow he strain'd: the starting arrow sung;

As when the fire of gods, with wrathful hand,
 Drives the swift lightning and the forked brand,
 To waste the labors of the careful swains,
 Consume the mountain flocks, or scorch the plains;
 With sudden glare appears the fiery ray;
 No thought can trace it thro' th' ethereal way:
 So swift thy winged shaft, Ulysses! flew,
 Nor could the following eye its speed pursue.
 The flight of Teucer's arrow far surpass,
 Upon a rural hearth it pitch'd at last,
 To Ceres built; where swains, in early spring,
 With joy were wont their annual gifts to bring;
 When first to view, above the furrow'd plain,
 With pleasing verdure, rose the springing grain.
 Thro' all the host applauding shouts resound,
 The hills repeat them, and the woods around.

THE bended bow bold Merion next assumes,
 A shaft selects, and smooths its purple plumes:
 He plac'd it on the string, and bending low,
 With all his force collected, strain'd the bow.
 Up the light air the starting arrow sprung;
 The tough bow crack'd; the twanging cordage sung,
 Beyond the reach of sight the weapon drove,
 And tow'r'd amid th' ethereal space above:
 But as it rose, a heron cross'd before,
 From inland marshes steering to the shore;
 Under the wing it reach'd her with a wound;
 Screaming she wheel'd, then tumbled to the ground.

And

And thus the youth: Illustrious chiefs! I claim,
If not the prize, at least superior fame:
Ungovern'd strength alone the arrow sends;
To hit the mark, the shooter's art commends.
In mirthful mood the hero thus address'd;
And all their favor and applause express'd.

ULYSSES! take the bow, Atrides cries,
The silver bowl, brave Teucer! be thy prize.
In ev'ry art, my friends! you all excel;
And each deserves a prize for shooting well:
For tho' the first rewards the victors claim,
Glory ye merit all, and lasting fame.
He said; and pond'ring in his grateful mind,
Distinguish'd honors for the dead design'd.

WARRIORS of Greece, and valiant aids from far,
Our firm associates in the works of war!
Here from a rock the Theban stream descends,
And to a lake its silver current sends;
Whose surface smooth, unruffled by the breeze,
The hills inverted shows and downward trees:
Ye daring youths! whose manly limbs divide
The mounting surge, and brave the rushing tide;
All ye, whom hopes of victory inspire,
Stand forth distinguish'd; let the crowd retire.
This costly armor shall the youth obtain,
Who comes victorious from the war'ry plain;
That island compass'd, where the poplar grows,
And in the lake its wav'ring image shows,

Who measuring back the liquid space, before
His rivals, shall regain the flow'ry shore.
This golden bowl is fix'd the second prize,
Esteem'd alike for fashion and for size.

THE hero thus: with thirst of glory fir'd;
Crete's valiant monarch to the prize aspir'd;
With Sparta's younger chief; Ulysses came;
And brave Clearchus emulous of fame,
A wealthy warrior from the Samian shore,
In cattle rich, and heaps of precious ore:
Distinguish'd in the midst the heroes stood,
Eager to plunge into the shining flood.

His brother's ardor purpos'd to restrain,
Atrides strove, and counsel'd thus, in vain:
Desist, my brother! shun th' unequal strife;
For late you stood upon the verge of life;
No mortal man his vigor can retain,
When flowing wounds have empty'd ev'ry vein.
If now you perish in the wat'ry way,
Grief upon grief shall cloud this mournful day:
Desist, respect my counsel, and be wise;
Some other Spartan in your place will rise:
To change his brother's purpose thus he try'd;
But nothing mov'd: the gen'rous youth reply'd,
Brother! in vain you urge me to forbear,
From love and fond affection prompt to fear;
For firm, as e'er before, my limbs remain,
To dash the fluid waves, or scour the plain.

He said, and went before. The heroes move
To the dark covert of a neighb'ring grove;
Which to the bank its shady walks extends,
Where mixing with the lake a riv'let ends.
Prompt to contend, their purple robes they loose,
Their figur'd vests and gold embroider'd shoes;
And thro' the grove descending to the strand,
Along the flow'ry bank in order stand.
As when, in some fair temple's sacred shrine,
A statue stands, express'd by skill divine,
Apollo's or the herald pow'r's, who brings
Jove's mighty mandates on his airy wings;
The form majestic awes the bending crowd:
In port and stature such, the heroes stood.

STARTING at once, with equal strokes, they sweep
The smooth expanse, and shoot into the deep;
The Cretan chief, exerting all his force,
His rivals far surpass'd, and led the course;
Behind Atrides, emulous of fame;
Clearchus next; and last Ulysses came.
And now they measur'd back the wat'ry space,
And saw from far the limits of the race.
Ulysses then, with thirst of glory fir'd,
The Samian left, and to the prize aspir'd;
Who, emulous, and dreading to be last,
With equal speed, the Spartan hero pass'd.
Alarm'd, the Cretan monarch strove, with pain,
His doubtful hopes of conquest to maintain;

Exerting ev'ry nerve, his limbs he ply'd,
And wishing, from afar, the shore deserv'd :
For near and nearer still Ulysses prest ;
The waves he felt rebounding from his breast.
With equal zeal for victory they strove ;
When, gliding sudden from the roofs of Jove,
Pallas approach'd ; behind a cloud conceal'd,
Ulysses only saw her form reveal'd.
Majestic by the hero's side she stood ;
Her shining sandals press'd the trembling flood.
She whisper'd soft, as when the western breeze
Stirs the thick reeds, or shakes the rustling trees :
Still shall thy soul, with endless thirst of fame,
Aspire to victory, in ev'ry game.
The honors, which from bones and sinews rise,
Are highly valu'd by the good and wise :
To envy still they rouse the human kind ;
And oft, than courted, better far declin'd.
To brave Idomenæus yield the race ;
Contented to obtain the second place.
The Goddess thus : while, stretching to the land,
With joy the Cretan chief approach'd the strand ;
Ulysses next arriv'd ; and, spent with toil,
The weary Samian grasp'd the welcome soil.

BUT far behind the Spartan warrior lay,
Fatigu'd, and fainting, in the wat'ry way.
Thrice struggling, from the lake, his head he rear'd ;
And thrice, imploring aid, his voice was heard.
The Cretan monarch hastes the youth to save,
And Ithacus again divides the wave ;

With

With force renew'd their manly limbs they ply;
And from their breasts the whit'ning billows fly.
Full in the midst a rocky isle divides
The liquid space, and parts the silver tides;
Once cultivated, now with thickets green
O'erspread, two hillocks and a vale between.
Here dwelt an aged swain; his cottage stood
Under the cliffs, encompass'd by a wood.
From poverty secure, he heard afar,
In peace profound, the tumults of the war.
Mending a net before his rural gate,
From other toils repos'd, the peasant sat;
When first the voice of Menelaus came,
By ev'ning breezes wafted from the stream.
Hast'ning, his skiff he loos'd, and spread the sail;
Some present god supply'd a prosp'rous gale:
For as the Spartan chief, with toil subdu'd,
Hopeless of life, was sinking in the flood;
The swain approach'd, and in his barge receiv'd
Him safe, from danger imminent retriev'd.

UPON a willow's trunk Therfites sat,
Contempt and laughter fated to create.
Where, bending from a hollow bank, it hung,
And rooted to the mould'ring surface clung;
He saw Atrides safe; and thus aloud,
With leer malign, address'd the list'ning crowd.
Here on the flow'ry turf a hearth shall stand;
A hecatomb the fav'ring gods demand,

Who sav'd Atrides in this dire debate,
And snatch'd the hero from the jaws of fate:
Without his aid we all might quit the field;
Ulysses, Ajax, and Tydides, yield:
His mighty arm alone the host defends,
But dire disaster still the chief attends:
Last sun beheld him vanquish'd on the plain;
Then warriors sav'd him, now a shepherd swain.
Defend him still from persecuting fate!
Protect the hero who protects the state;
In martial conflicts watch with prudent fear,
And, when he swims, let help be always near!
He said; and, scorn and laughter to excite,
His features foul he writh'd, with envious spite,
Smiling contempt; and pleas'd his ranc'rous heart
With aiming thus oblique a venom'd dart.
But joy'd not long; for soon the faithless wood,
Strain'd from the root, resign'd him to the flood.
Plunging and sputt'ring as his arms he spread,
A load of soil came thund'ring on his head,
Slipt from the bank: along the winding shore,
With laughter loud he heard the echoes roar,
When from the lake his crooked form he rear'd,
With horror pale, with bloating clay besmear'd:
Then clamb'ring by the trunk, in sad dismay,
Which half immers'd with all its branches lay,
Confounded, to the tents he sculk'd along,
Amid the shouts and insults of the throng.

Now

Now cloth'd in public view the heroes stand,
With scepters grac'd the ensigns of command.
The Cretan monarch, as his prize, assumes
The polish'd helmet, crown'd with waving plumes,
The silver mail, the buckler's weighty round,
Th' embroider'd belt, with golden buckles bound.
The second prize Laertes' son receiv'd,
With less applause from multitudes deceiv'd;
The first he could have purchas'd; but declin'd,
And yielded, to the martial maid resign'd.

Thus they. The Thebans, near the eastern gate,
Around their pyres in silent sorrow wait:
Hopeless and sad they mourn'd their heroes slain,
The best and bravest on their native plain.
The king himself, in deeper sorrow, mourn'd;
With rage and mingled grief his bosom burn'd.
Like the grim lion, when his offspring slain
He sees, and round him drawn the hunter's train;
Couch'd in the shade with fell intent he lies,
And glares upon the foes with burning eyes:
Such Creon seem'd: hot indignation drain'd
Grief's wat'ry sources, and their flow restrain'd.
Upon a turret o'er the gate he stood,
And saw the Argives, like a shady wood,
Extended wide; and dreading fraud design'd,
Still to the plain his watchful eyes confin'd,
Suspicious from his hatred, and the pow'r
Of restless passions, which his heart devour:

And when at ev'n's approach the host retir'd,
And from the labors of the day respir'd,
Within the walls he drew his martial pow'rs,
And kept with strictest watch the gates and tow'rs.

SOON as the night possess'd th' ethereal plain,
And o'er the nations stretch'd her silent reign,
The guards were plac'd, and to the gentle sway
Of sleep subdu'd, the weary warriors lay.
Tydides only wak'd, by anxious care
Distracted, still he mourn'd his absent fair,
Deeming her lost; his slighted counsel mov'd
Lasting resentment, and the truce approv'd:
Contending passions shook his mighty frame;
As warring winds impel the ocean's stream,
When south and east with mingled rage contend,
And in a tempest on the deep descend:
Now, stretch'd upon the couch, supine he lay;
Then, rising anxious, wish'd the morning ray.
Impatient thus, at last, his turbid mind,
By various counsels variously inclin'd,
The chief address'd: Or shall I now recall
Th' Etolian warriors from the Theban wall;
Obey the warning by a goddess giv'n,
Nor slight her counsel dictated from heav'n?
Or shall I try, by one deciding blow,
The war at once to end, and crush the foe?
This pleases most; nor shall the voice of fame
The daring deed, in after ages, blame.
No truce I swore, but shun'd it, and remov'd,
Alone dissenting while the rest approv'd.

Soon

Soon as the morn, with early light reveal'd,
 Has call'd the Theban warriors to the field;
 Against the town I'll lead my martial pow'rs,
 And fire with flaming brands her hated tow'rs:
 The bane of Greece, whence dire debate arose
 To bid the peaceful nations first be foes;
 Where Tydeus fell, and many heroes more,
 Banish'd untimely to the Stygian shore.
 The public voice of Greece for vengeance calls;
 And shall applaud the stroke by which she falls.
 He purpos'd; but the gods, who honor right,
 Deny'd to treason what is due to might.

WHEN from the east appear'd the morning fair,
 The Theban warriors to the woods repair,
 Fearless, unarm'd; with many a harness'd wain,
 The woody heights were crowded and the plain.
 Tydides saw; and, issuing from his tent,
 In arms complete, to call his warriors, went.
 Their leader's martial voice the soldiers heard
 Each in his tent, and at the call appear'd
 In shining arms. Dēiphobus began,
 For virtue fam'd, a venerable man.
 Him Tydeus lov'd; and in his faithful hand
 Had plac'd the sceptre of supreme command,
 To rule the state; when, from his native tow'rs,
 To Thebes the hero led his martial pow'rs;
 His son, an infant, to his care resign'd,
 With sage advice to form his tender mind.

The

The hero thus : Illustrious chief ! declare
What you intend, and whither point the war.
The truce commenc'd, you cannot, and be just,
The Thebans now assault, who freely trust
To public faith engag'd : unarm'd they go
Far thro' the woods and plains, nor fear a foe.

His leader's purpose thus the warrior try'd ;
And, inly vex'd, Tydides thus reply'd :
Father ! thy words from ignorance proceed ;
The truce I swore not, nor approv'd the deed :
The rest are bound, and therefore must remain
Ling'ring inactive on this hostile plain :
The works of war abandon'd, let them shed
Their unavailing sorrows o'er the dead :
Or aim the dart, or hurl the disk in air ;
Some poultry presents shall the victors share.
Warriors we came, in nobler strifes to dare ;
To fight and conquer in the lists of war ;
To conquer Thebes : and Jove himself ordains,
With wreaths of triumph, to reward our pains.
Wide to receive us stand the Theban gates ;
A spacious entry, open'd by the fates,
To take destruction in ; their turrets stand
Defenceless, and expect the flaming brand.
Now let us snatch th' occasion while we may,
Years waste in vain and perish by delay,
That, Thebes o'erthrown, our tedious toils may cease,
And we behold our native walls in peace.

TYDIDES

TYDIDES thus: the antient warrior burns
With indignation just, and thus returns:
O son! unworthy of th' illustrious line
From which you spring; your sire's reproach and
mine!

Did I e'er teach you, justice to disclaim;
And steal, by treachery, dishonest fame?
The truce subsists with all the rest; are we
Alone excepted, unengag'd and free?
Why, warriors! do not then these hostile tow'rs,
Against us, send at once their martial pow'rs?
And are we safe, but that the treaty stands,
And from unequal force protects our bands?

In this our foes confide; the dead they burn,
And mix with tears their ashes in the urn.
Their tow'rs defenceless, and their gates unbarr'd,
Shall we with wrongs their confidence reward?
No; tho' each warrior of this num'rous band
Should yield to execute what you command;

Yet would not I, obedient to thy will,
Blot my long labors with a deed so ill.

Whatever hard or dang'rous you propose,
Tho' old and weak, I shun not, nor oppose:
But what the gods command us to forbear,
The prudent will avoid, the bravest fear.
He said; and to the ground his buckler flung;

On the hard soil the brazen orbit rung:
The rest, approving, dropt upon the field
His pond'rous jav'lin, each, and shining shield.

THE warlike son of Tydeus straight resign'd,
To dire disorder, all his mighty mind,
And sudden wrath; as when the troubled air,
From kindled lightning, shines with fiery glare:
With fury so inflam'd, the hero burn'd,
And frowning to Demphobus return'd:
I know thee, wretch! and mark thy constant aim,
To teach the host their leader thus to blame.
Long have I borne your pride; your rev'rend age,
A guardian's name, suppress'd my kindling rage:
But to protect your insolence, no more
Shall these avail, and screen it as before.

He said; and more his fury to provoke,
Replying thus, the aged warrior spoke:
Vain youth! unmov'd thy angry threats I hear;
When tyrants threaten, slaves alone should fear:
To me is ev'ry servile part unknown,
To glory in a smile, or fear a frown.
Your mighty sire I knew by counsel rul'd;
His fiercest transports sober reason cool'd.
But wild and lawless, like the stormy wind,
The sport of passion, impotent, and blind,
The desp'rate paths of folly you pursue,
And scorn instruction with a lofty brow:
Yet know, proud prince! my purpose I retain,
And see thy threat'ning eye-balls roll in vain:
Never, obsequious to thy mad command,
Against the foe I'll lift a hostile hand;

Till,

Till, righteously fulfill'd, the truce expires
Which heav'n has witness'd and the sacred fires.

HE said; and, by his sharp reproaches stung,
With sudden hand, his lance the hero stung:
Too sure the aim; his faithful friend it found,
And open'd in his side a deadly wound:
Stagg'ring he fell; and, on the verge of death,
In words like these resign'd his parting breath:
O Diomed, my son! for thee I fear:
Sure heav'n is angry, and its vengeance near;
For whom the gods distinguish by their hate,
Themselves are made the ministers of fate;
Far from their side, the destin'd victims drive
Their friends intent to succor and retrieve.
Ere yet their vengeance falls, the pow'rs invoke,
While uninflicted hangs the fatal stroke;
And rule the transports of your wrath, lest fear
Make sound advice a stranger to your ear.
Speaking he dy'd; his gen'rous spirit fled
To mix with heroes in th' Elysian shade.

AMAZ'D, at first, th' Etolian warriors stood;
No voice, no action, thro' the wond'ring crowd;
Silent they stood, like rows of forest trees,
When Jove's dread thunder quells the summer breeze:
But soon on ev'ry side a tumult rose,
Loud as the ocean when a tempest blows;
Disorder wild the mingling ranks confounds,
The voice of sorrow mix'd with angry sounds.

On

On ev'ry side against the chief appears
A brazen bulwark rais'd of shields, and spears,
Fast closing round. But from his thigh he drew
His shining blade, and on the phalanx flew;
With gesture fierce the threat'ning steel he wav'd;
But check'd its fury, and the people sav'd:
As the good shepherd spares his tender flock,
And lightens, when he strikes, the falling crook.
The crowd dividing shun'd the hero's ire;
As from a lion's rage the swains retire,
When dreadful o'er the mangled prey he stands,
By brandish'd darts unaw'd and flaming brands.

AND now the flame of sudden rage suppress,
Remorse and sorrow stung the hero's breast.
Distracted thro' the scatt'ring crowd he went,
And sought the dark recesses of his tent;
He enter'd: but the menial servants, bred
To wait his coming, straight with horror fled.
Against the ground he dash'd his bloody dart;
And utter'd thus the swellings of his heart:
Why fly my warriors? why the menial train,
Who joy'd before to meet me from the plain,
Why shun they now their lord's approach; nor bring,
To wash my bloody hands, the cleansing spring?
Too well, alas! my fatal rage they know,
To them more dreadful now than to the foe;
No enemy, alas! this spear has stain'd,
With hostile gore in glorious battle drain'd:

My

My guardian's blood it shews, whose hoary hairs
Still watch'd my welfare with a father's cares.
Thou Pow'r supreme ! whose unresisted sway
The fates of men and mortal things obey !
If wise and good, why did thy hand impart
So fierce an impulse to this bounding heart ?
By fury rul'd and impotent of mind,
No awe restrains me, and no tie can bind :
Hence, by the madness of my rage o'erthrown,
My father's friend lies murder'd, and my own.
He said ; and, yielding to his fierce despair,
With both his hands he rent his rooted hair ;
And, where his locks in shining ringlets grew,
A load of ashes from the hearth he threw,
Rolling in dust : but now around the slain
His warriors stood, assembled on the plain ;
For total insurrection ripe they stood ;
Their angry murmurs rose to tumult loud.

ULYSSES soon the dire disorder heard ;
And present to explore the cause appear'd :
The hero came, and, 'midst the warriors, found
Dēiphobus extended on the ground.
A flood of sorrow started to his eyes,
But soon he check'd each symptom of surprize
With prudent care ; while pressing round the chief
Each strove to speak the universal grief :
Their mingled spears in wild disorder shook ;
Like the sharp reeds along some winding brook,

When

When thro' the leafless woods the north-wind blows,
Parent of ice and thick descending snows;
Now fell revenge had bath'd in streams of blood,
And pow'r in vain her desperate course withstood:
But Ithacus, well skill'd in ev'ry art
To fix, or change each purpose of the heart;
Their stern decrees by soft persuasion broke;
And answer'ing, thus with prudent purpose spoke:
Warriors! your gen'rous rage approve I must;
Dire was the deed; the purpos'd vengeance just;
But, when the kings in full assembly sit,
To them the crime, and punishment commit:
For rash procedure wrongs the fairest cause;
And private justice still insults the laws.
Now to your tents your shields and lances bear;
Theseus expects us, and the hour is near:
The altars flame; the priests in order stand,
With sacrifice, to hallow ev'ry band:
But to the covert of a tent convey,
Sav'd from the scorching winds and solar ray,
These dear remains; till Theseus has decreed
Distinguish'd obsequies to grace the dead.
The hero thus; and, from his shoulders, threw
The regal cloak of gold, and shining blue;
Which o'er the flane, with prudent care, he spread,
His ghastly features, from the crowd, to shade.
Thrice to his eyes a flood of sorrow came;
Thrice on the brink he check'd the gushing stream
In act to flow; his rising sighs suppress;
Patient of grief, he lock'd it in his breast.

THE

THE
EPIGONIAD.

BOOK VI.

TO sad despair th' Etolian chief resign'd,
And dire remorse, which stung his tortur'd mind,
From early dawn, in dust extended lay,
By all abandon'd till the setting ray.
'Twas then Cassandra came; and, at the door,
Thrice call'd her lord: he started from the floor:
In sullen majesty his chair of state,
Full in the midst opposed to the gate,
The hero press'd: the anxious maid drew near,
By love excited, and restrain'd by fear:
Trembling before the chief she stood; and held
A bowl of wine with temp'ring mixtures quell'd;
The fragrant juice which fam'd Thesprotia yields,
The vintage of her cliffs, and sunny fields.
And thus: Dread lord! reject not with disdain
A present offer'd by a humble swain.
This bowl receive, of gentle force to charm
Distress, and of its rigor grief disarm.

How

How vain to grieve for ever for the past !
No hour recalls the actions of the last :
Nor groans, nor sighs, nor streams of sorrow shed,
From their long slumber can awake the dead.
When death's stern pow'r his iron sceptre lays
On the cold lips, the vital spirit strays
To worlds unknown : nor can the dead perceive
The tears of friends or lovers when they grieve.

To sooth his passion, thus the virgin try'd ;
With wonder, thus th' Etolian chief reply'd :
Say who you are, who thus approach my seat,
Unaw'd by good Dēiphobus's fate ?
When all avoid my presence, nor appear,
By indignation banish'd, or by fear.
What is thy name ? what deed of mine could bind
To friendship so unchang'd thy constant mind ;
Still to survive the horror of a crime,
Whose color blots the registers of time ?

THE hero thus. Cassandra thus replies :
Iphicles is my name ; my country lies
Where Antirrhium's rocky shores divide,
Extended in the deep, th' Ionian tide.
There dwells my fire possesst of ample store,
In flocks and herds and gold's refulgent ore.
Oeneus his name ; his vessels on the main,
From rich Hesperia waft him yearly gain,
And that fam'd land, whose promontories run
Far to the west, beneath the setting sun ;

Where

Where ev'ry cliff with veins of silver gleams,
And sands of gold lie glitt'ring in the streams.
In Hymen's sacred ties two sons he bred,
Me, and my valiant brother Lycomed.
The youngest I, was charg'd his flocks to keep;
My brother rul'd his galleys on the deep.
Once as he left Iberia's wealthy shore,
With Boëtic fleeces fraught and precious ore;
Phœnician pirates waited on the strand,
Where high Pachynus stretches from the land;
In that fam'd isle where Ætna lifts his spires,
With smoke obscure, and blows his sulph'rous fires.
Behind the cliffs conceal'd, the treach'rous band
Waited the Greeks, descending on the strand:
My brother there with twenty youths they slew;
Their sudden arrows from an ambush flew.
Dire was the deed; and still my sorrows stream,
Whene'er that argument of woe I name;
And grief prevails; but, in your presence, most;
You still recall the brother whom I lost:
For such he was in lineaments of face,
In martial stature, and majestic grace;
Tho' less in all; in form inferior far;
And still, tho' valiant, less in works of war.
Hence, deeply rooted in my constant heart,
You challenge, as your own, a brother's part:
And I alone, of all the host, remain
To share your grief and suffer in your pain.

THUS

Thus by an artful tale, the virgin strove
To shun discov'ry, and conceal her love.
Yet still her looks, her gestures, all express'd
The maid; her love in blushes stood confess'd.
Tydides saw; and quickly, to his thought,
Each circumstance the fair Cassandra brought.
Silent he sat; and fix'd in deep surprize,
Her flushing features mark'd and downcast eyes.
He thus reply'd: The native truth reveal;
And, what I ask you, hope not to conceal.
Or shall I credit what you now have said,
Oeneus your sire, your brother Lycomed?
Or art thou she, whose beauty first did move,
Within my peaceful breast, the rage of love?

With look and voice severe, the hero spoke.
Aw'd and abash'd, the conscious virgin shook;
She dropt the silver goblet on the ground;
The fragrant liquor drench'd the pavement round,
And thus Tydides with a frown address'd:
Thy art is useless, and the truth confess'd;
Nor can that fair disguise of martial arms
And male attire; conceal thy fatal charms.
Those eyes I see, whose soft enchantment stole
My peace; and stir'd a tempest in my soul:
By their mild sight, in innocence array'd,
To guilty madness was my heart betray'd.
Dëiphobus is dead; his mournful ghost,
Lamenting, wanders on the Stygian coast;

And

And blames my wrath. Oh! that the sun, which gave
Light to thy birth, had set upon thy grave;
And he had liv'd! now lifeless on the plain
A corse he lies, and number'd with the slain.

THE hero ended thus; with melting eye,
The virgin turn'd, unable to reply.
In sorrow graceful, as the queen of love
Who mourn'd Adonis in the Syrian grove,
Confounded and abash'd, she left the tent,
And thro' the host in silent anguish went,
Far to the left; where, in a lonely wood,
To Ceres built, a rural temple stood;
By swains frequented once, but now the place
Unfrightly shrubs o'erspread and weeds disgrace.
Thither Cassandra went; and at the shrine,
With suppliant voice address'd the pow'r divine:
Hear me, dread genius of this sacred grove!
Let my complaints thy sov'reign pity move.
To seek the friendly shelter of thy dome,
With heart unstain'd, and guiltless hands, I come:
Love is my crime; and, in thy rural seat,
From infamy I seek a safe retreat.
By blame unmerited, and cold neglect,
Banish'd I come; receive me and protect!
She pray'd, and ent'ring, 'gainst a pillar, staid
Her lance; and on the floor her armor laid.
Then falling prostrate pour'd a flood of tears,
With present ills oppress'd and future fears.

'Twas then the herald of the queen of love,
Zelotypé, descended in the grove,
By Venus sent; but still her counsels fail'd;
And Pallas with superior sway prevail'd:
The phantom enter'd, and assum'd a form,
Pale as the moon appearing thro' a storm;
In Amyclea's shape disguis'd she came;
The same her aspect, and her voice the same.
Cassandra saw; a sudden horror froze
Her veins; erect her parted locks arose,
Stir'd from the root: impatient thus the maid,
With trembling lips, in fault'ring accents, said:
My lov'd, my honor'd parent! have my groans,
From death's deep slumber, rous'd thy sacred bones:
I hop'd that nothing could your peace molest;
Nor mortal cares disturb eternal rest;
That safe for ever on th' Elysian shore,
You heard of human misery no more.

CASSANDRA thus; and thus the Paphian maid:
Your gen'rous love, my child, is ill repaid;
Your griefs I feel, and bear a parent's part;
Tho' blood no more returns to warm my heart;
And that, which first your mortal being bred,
To dust lies mould'ring, in its earthy bed.
To Calydon, my child, with speed return;
Your father grieves; your gay companions mourn;
He deems you lost, and desp'rate of his state,
By grief subdu'd, invokes his ling'ring fate:

Incessant

Incessant tears bedew his wrinkled face,
And ashes foul his hoary locks disgrace.
Return, return! nor let misjudging pride,
With further errors, strive the past to hide.
Return, once more to bliss his aged eyes,
Or, by your guilty stay a parent dies.

SHE ended thus. Her arms Cassandra spread
To fold, in close embrace, the parting shade;
In vain; for, starting from her grasp, it flew,
And, gliding thro' the shady walks, withdrew.
The virgin now awaits the rising morn,
With purpose fix'd impatient to return;
And when, thro' broken clouds, a glimm'ring ray
Of early dawn foretold approaching day;
The spear she grasp'd, and on her temples plac'd
The golden casque, with various plumage grac'd;
Tydides' gift; when in the ranks of fight
The brave Clytander sunk beneath his might.
The gods she call'd; and, bending to the ground,
Their aid invoc'd with reverence profound.
Then left the dome; and where Iſmenus strays,
Winding thro' thickest woods his wat'ry maze,
Her way pursu'd: a hostile band drew near;
Their tread she heard, and saw their armor clear;
Chief of the Theban youth; the herds they drove,
And flocks collected from the hills above.
For thus the Paphian goddess had betray'd,
To hands of cruel foes, the guiltless maid.

By sudden terror check'd, at first she stood;
Then turn'd, and sought the covert of the wood;
Nor so escap'd: her glitt'ring armor shone,
The starry helmet and the lofty cone,
Full to the glowing east; its golden rays
Her winding flight betray'd thro' all its maze.
The Thebans saw; and, rushing 'midst the shade
With shouts of triumph, seiz'd the trembling maid.
Amaz'd and pale, before the hostile band,
She stood; and dropt the jav'lin from her hand:
O spare my life! she cry'd, nor wealth, nor fame
To purchase in the works of war, I came.
No hate to you I bear, or Creon's sway,
Whose sov'reign will the sons of Thebes obey:
Me hapless friendship hither led, to share,
With Diomed, the dangers of the war.
I now return and quit the martial strife,
My fire to succor on the verge of life;
Who crush'd beneath a load of sorrow bends,
Aid to the grave, with painful steps, descends.
But if the plea of pity you reject,
The stronger ties of equity respect:
A truce we swore; Jove witnesses the deed;
On him who breaks it, vengeance will succeed.

Thus as the virgin spoke, Phericles ey'd
The arms she wore; and sternly thus reply'd:
Ill-fated wretch! that panoply to wear;
The same my brother once in fight did bear;

Whom

Whom fierce Tydides, with superior might,
O'erthrew and vanquish'd in the ranks of fight,
If with his foe my brother's spoils you shar'd,
A mark of love, or merited reward;
Prepare to yield them and resign thy breath;
To vengeance due: Clytander claims thy death.

FROWNING he spoke, and drew his shining blade;
Beneath the lifted steel, th' unhappy maid
Confounded stoop'd: Menœtius caught the stroke
On his broad shield; and interposing spoke:
Brave youth! respect my counsel, and suspend
The sudden vengeance which you now intend.
The chiefs of Thebes, the rulers of the state,
In full assembly, at the Cadmean gate,
A monument for great Leophron rear;
His name, achievements, and descent to bear.
Thither let this devoted youth be led,
An off'ring grateful to the hero's shade:
Nor shall Clytander less the deed approve;
Or friendly zeal applaud, and feel our love;
When fame shall tell, in Pluto's gloomy reign,
How stern Tydides mourns this warrior slain.
Thus ignorantly they; nor knew the peace
Of happy patriots, when their labors cease;
That fell revenge and life-consuming hate
Find no admittance, to molest their state.

AND now they led the captive cross the plain;
Scarce could her trembling knees their load sustain;

Thrice had her fault'ring tongue her sex reveal'd,
But conscious shame oppos'd it and conceal'd.
Their monarch at the Cadmean gate they found,
In mournful state, with all his peers around.
Oblations to Leophron's mighty shade,
In honey, milk, and fragrant wines they paid.
And thus Lycaon's son address'd the king:
A grateful off'ring to your rites we bring.
This youth, the friend of Diomed, we found
Clad in the armor which Clytander own'd;
My brother's spoils, by Diomed possess'd,
When his keen jav'lin pierc'd the hero's breast.
Soon had my rage the hostile deed repaid,
With vengeance grateful to his kindred shade;
But public griefs the first atonements claim,
And heroes of a more distinguish'd name:
Leophron, once his country's pride and boast;
Andremon too, the bulwark of the host,
His blood demands; for when their souls shall know
The sweet revenge, in Pluto's shades below,
Pleas'd with our zeal, will each illustrious ghost,
With lighter footsteps, press th' Elysian coast.

He spoke; the princes all at once incline;
The rest, with shouts, applaud the dire design.
An altar soon of flow'ry turf they raise:
On ev'ry side the sacred torches blaze:
The bowls, in shining order, plac'd around;
The fatal knife was whetted for the wound.

Decreed

Decreed to perish, stood the helpless fair;
Like some soft fawn, when, in the hunter's snare
Involv'd, she sees him from his seat arise,
His brandish'd truncheon dreads, and hears his cries:
Silent she stands, to barb'rous force resign'd,
In anguish soft, dissolv'd her tender mind.
The priests in order ev'ry rite prepar'd;
Her neck and bosom, for the blow, they bar'd;
The helmet loos'd, the buckled mail unbound,
Whose shining circles fenc'd her neck around.
Down sunk the fair disguise; and full to fight
The virgin stood, with charms divinely bright.
The comely ringlets of her flowing hair,
Such as the wood-nymphs wear, and Naiades fair,
Hung loose; her middle by a zone embrac'd,
Which fix'd the floating garment round her waist.
Venus herself divine effulgence shed
O'er all her stature, and her lovely head;
Such as in spring the color'd blossoms show,
When on their op'ning leaves the zephyrs blow:
Amazement seiz'd the chiefs; and all around,
With murmurs mix'd the wond'ring crowds resound.
Most vote to spare: the angry monarch cries:
Ye ministers, proceed! the captive dies.
Shall any here, by weak compassion mov'd,
A captive spare by stern Tydides lov'd?
The scourge of Thebes, whose wide-destroying hand
Has thin'd our armies in their native land,
And stain my son: by all the gods I swear,
Whose names, to cite in vain, the nations fear,

That none, he loves, shall ever scape my rage :
The vulgar plea I scorn, of sex, or age,
Ev'n she, who now appears with ev'ry grace
Adorn'd, each charm of stature and of face ;
Ev'n tho' from Venus she could claim the prize,
Her life to vengeance forfeited, she dies.

STERNLY the monarch ended. All were still,
With mute submission to the sov'reign will :
Lycaon's valiant son except ; alone
His gen'rous ardor thus oppos'd the throne :
Dread sov'reign ! listen with a patient ear,
And what I now shall offer, deign to hear.
When first by force we seiz'd this captive maid,
The truce was vi'lated, our faith betray'd ;
And justice, which, in war and peace, prevails
Alike, and weighs their deeds with equal scales,
Her freedom claims, with presents to atone .
For what our rage perfidiously has done :
Let us not, now, to further wrongs proceed ;
But fear the curse for perjury decreed.

PHERICLES thus : and, with a stern regard,
His indignation thus the king declar'd :
Vain giddy youth ! forbear, with factious breath,
To rouse my justice to pronounce thy death :
In opposition, first of all you move,
While others hear in silence, and approve.
Your bold presumption check, and learn to dread
My vengeance thunder'd on your wretched head.

FROWN

FROWNING he ended thus: his threats defy'd,
With gen'rous heat Phericles thus reply'd:
Princes! attend, and trust my words sincere;
The king I honor, and his will revere,
When truth gives sanction to his just commands;
Nor common right in opposition stands:
Yet gen'rous minds a principle retain,
Which promises and threats attempt in vain,
Which claims dominion, by the gods imprest,
The love of justice in the human breast:
By this inspir'd, against superior might,
I rise undaunted in the cause of right.
And now, by all th' avenging gods, I swear,
Whose names, to cite in vain, the nations fear;
That no bold warrior of the Theban bands,
This maid shall violate with hostile hands;
While these my arms have force the lance to wield,
And lift in her defence this pond'rous shield,
Not ev'n the king himself, whose sov'reign sway
The martial sons of sacred Thebes obey.

He said; and, by his bold example fir'd,
Twelve warriors rose, with equal zeal inspir'd.
With shining steel the altar they surround,
The fire now flaming, and the victim crown'd.
On ev'ry side in wild disorder move
The thick compacted crowds; as when a grove,
Rock'd by a sudden whirlwind, bends and strains,
From right to left, along the woodland plains:

Fell discord soon had rag'd, in civil blood,
With wide destruction not to be withstood;
For from his seat the angry monarch sprung,
And lifted, for the blow, the sceptre hung;
But 'midst the tumult Clytophon appear'd,
Approv'd for wisdom, and with rev'rence heard.
Straight, by the robe, the furious chief he seiz'd,
And thus, with sage advice, his wrath appeas'd:
Hear, mighty prince! respect the words of age,
And calm the wasteful tempest of thy rage;
The public welfare to revenge prefer,
For nations suffer when their sov'reigns err.
It ill becomes us now, when hostile pow'rs
With strictest siege invest our strait'ned tow'rs;
It ill becomes us thus, with civil arms,
To wound the state, and aggravate our harms.
Hear, all ye princes! what to me appears.
A prudent counsel, worthy of your ears:
Let us inquire, if in our hands we hold
A life esteem'd by Diomed the bold:
If, in his breast, those tender passions reign,
Which charms like these must kindle and maintain;
Our mandates freely to his tent we send,
For to our will his haughty soul must bend:
Nor dares he, while the Theban walls inclose
A pledge so dear, invade us or oppose;
But must submit, whenever we require,
Or with his pow'rs to aid us, or retire.

He said ; the monarch painfully suppress
His burning rage, and lock'd it in his breast.
He thus reply'd : Thy prudent words inspire
Pacific counsels, and subdue mine ire ;
But if in peace I rul'd the Theban state,
Nor hostile armies thunder'd at my gate ;
They had not dar'd, with insolence and spight,
My purpose to oppose and scorn my might.
He said, and to his seat again retir'd ;
While sudden transport ev'ry breast inspir'd ;
As swains rejoice, when, from the troubled skies,
By breezes swept, a gather'd tempest flies ;
With wish'd return the sun exerts his beams,
To cheer the woods and gild the shining streams.

MEAN while the son of Tydeus, thro' the plain,
With wishing eyes, Cassandra sought in vain ;
At ev'ry leader of the bands inquir'd ;
Then, sad and hopeless, to his tent retir'd.
'Twas then his grief the bounds of silence broke,
And thus in secret to himself he spoke :
Me sure, of all men's sons, the gods have curst
With their chief plagues, the greatest and the worst ;
Doom'd to disasters, from my earliest hour ;
Not wise to shun nor patient to endure.
From me the source, unnumber'd ills proceed
To all my friends ; Dæiphobus is dead !
His soul excluded seeks the nether skies,
And wrong'd Cassandra from my presence flies.

Me surely, at my birth, the gods design'd
Their rod of wrath; to scourge the human kind;
For slaughter form'd, with brutal fury brave,
Prompt to destroy, but impotent to save.
How could my madness blame thee, gen'rous maid?
And, with my crime, thy innocence upbraid!
Dēiphobus is fall'n! but not by thee;
Thy only fault, alas! was love to me:
For this, in plated steel thy limbs were dress'd,
A weighty shield thy tender arm oppress'd:
For this, thou didst to hostile fields repair,
And court such objects as distract the fair;
Patient above thy sex! an ill reward,
Blame and unjust reproach, was all you shar'd.
By my unkindness banish'd, now you roam,
And seek, thro' paths unknown, your distant home:
'To mountain wolves expos'd, a helpless prey,
And men unjust more terrible than they.
Save her, ye gods! and let me stand the aim
Of Jove's all-dreaded holt, and scorching flame.

Thus plain'd the hero till the setting ray
Withdrew, and ev'ning shades expell'd the day;
Then in his tent, before his lofty seat,
Appear'd a herald from the Theban state;
The hero's knees, with trembling hands, he press'd,
And with his message thus the chief address'd:
Hear, mighty prince! the tidings which I bring,
From Thebes assembled, and the Theban king.

An

An armed warrior of your native train,
At early dawn, was seiz'd upon the plain.
What others did, forgive, if I relate;
Creon commands me and the Theban state.
A fairer youth, in martial arms, ne'er came
To court bright honor in the fields of fame.
A casque of polish'd steel his temples press'd,
The golden cone with various plumage dress'd;
A silver mail embrac'd his body round,
And greaves of brass his slender ancles bound:
To Thebes well known the panoply he wore,
The same, which once, renown'd Clytander bore,
Our warriors dragg'd him to the Cadmean gate,
Where Creon, with the rulers of the state,
Assembled sat; the trembling captive stood,
With arms surrounded, and th' insulting crowd.
O spare my life! he cry'd, nor wealth, nor fame
To purchase in the works of war, I came.
No hate to you I bear, or Creon's sway,
Whose sov'reign will the sons of Thebes obey.
Me luckless friendship hither led, to share,
With Diomed, the dangers of the war.
I now return, and quit the martial strife,
My fire to succor on the verge of life;
Whose feeble age the present aid demands,
And kind assistance of my filial hands.
His words inclin'd the wisest and the best,
And some their gen'rous sympathy express:
But others, nothing mov'd, his guiltless head
With threats demanded, to avenge the dead:

And

And thus the king: My countrymen, attend!
In this, let all your loud contention end:
If Diomed, to save this valu'd life,
The field abandons and the martial strife;
The captive safe, with presents, I'll restore,
Of brass, and steel, and gold's refulgent ore:
But if these terms the haughty chief shall slight,
And for the Argives still exert his might;
Before our heroes' tombs, this youth shall bleed,
To please the living, and avenge the dead.
His sentence all approv'd; and to your ear,
As public herald, I the message bear;
And must your answer crave, without delay;
Creon and Thebes already blame my stay.

Thus as he spoke, contending passions strove,
With force oppos'd, the hero's soul to move;
As shifting winds impel the ocean's tide,
And sway the reeling waves from side to side:
Rage dictated revenge; but tender fear,
From love and pity, warn'd him to forbear:
Till, like a lion, fiercer from his pain,
These words broke forth in wrath and high disdain:
Go, tell your tyrant, that he tempts a soul,
Which presents cannot win, nor threats control:
Not form'd, like his, to mock at ev'ry tie;
With perjury to sport, and heav'n defy.
A common league the Argive warriors swore,
And seal'd the sacred tie with wine and gore:

My

My faith was plighted then, and ne'er shall fail,
Nor Creon's arts, to change me, aught avail.
But tell him loud, that all the host may hear,
And Thebes thro' all her warriors learn to fear;
If any, from himself, or by command,
The captive violates with hostile hand;
That all shall quickly rue the guilty deed,
When, to requite it, multitudes shall bleed.

STERNLY the hero ended, and resign'd,
To fierce disorder, all his mighty mind.
Already in his thoughts, with vengeful hands,
He dealt destruction 'midst the Theban bands.
In fancy saw the tott'ring turrets fall,
And led his warriors o'er the level'd wall.
Rous'd with the thought, from his high seat he sprung;
And grasp'd the sword, which on a column hung;
The shining blade he balanc'd thrice in air;
His launces next he view'd, and armor fair.
When, hanging 'midst the costly panoply,
A scarf embroider'd met the hero's eye,
Which fair Cassandra's skilful hands had wrought;
A present for her lord, in secret brought;
That day, when first he led his martial train
In arms, to combat on the Theban plain.
As some strong charm, which magic sounds compose,
Suspends a downward torrent as it flows;
Checks in the precipice its headlong course,
And calls it trembling upwards to its source:

Such

Such seem'd the robe, which, to the hero's eyes,
Made the fair artist in her charms to rise.
His rage, suspended in its full career,
To love resigns, to grief and tender fear.
Glad would he now his former words revoke,
And change the purpose which in wrath he spoke;
From hostile hands his captive fair to gain,
From fate to save her, or the servile chain:
But pride, and shame, the fond design suppress;
Silent he stood, and lock'd it in his breast.
Yet had the wary Theban well divin'd,
By symptoms sure, each motion of his mind:
With joy he saw the heat of rage suppress'd;
And thus again his artful words address'd:
Illustrious prince! with patience bend thine ear,
And what I now shall offer, deign to hear.
Of all the griefs, distressful mortals prove,
The woes of friendship most my pity move.
You much I pity, and the youth regret,
Whom you too rigidly resign to fate;
Expos'd, alone, no hope of comfort near,
The scorn and cruelty of foes to bear.
O that my timely counsel might avail,
For love, and sympathy, to turn the scale!
That Thebes releas'd from thy devouring sword,
The captive honor'd, and with gifts restor'd,
We yet might hope for peace, and you again
Enjoy the blessings of your native reign.

INSINUATING thus, the herald try'd
His aim to compass; and the chief reply'd:
In vain you strive to sway my constant mind;
I'll not depart while Theseus stays behind:
Me nothing e'er, to change my faith, shall move,
By men attested, and the gods above:
But since your lawless tyrant has detain'd
A valu'd hostage, treacherously gain'd;
And dire injustice only will restore:
When force compels, or proffer'd gifts implore:
A truce I grant, till the revolving sun,
Twice ten full circuits of his journey run,
From the red ocean, points the morning ray,
And on the steps of darkness pours the day:
Till then, from fight and council I abstain,
Nor lead my pow'rs to combat on the plain:
For this, your monarch to my tent shall send
The captive, and from injuries defend.
This proffer is my last; in vain will prove
All your attempts my fixed mind to move:
If Thebes accepts it, let a sign declare,
A flaming torch, display'd aloft in air,
From that high tow'r, whose airy top is known
By trav'lers from afar, and marks the town;
The fane of Jove: but if they shall reject
The terms I send, nor equity respect,
They soon shall feel the fury of mine ire,
In wasteful havoc, and the rage of fire.

THE hero thus; and round his shoulders flung
A shaggy cloak, with vulgar trappings hung;
And on his head a leathern helmet plac'd,
A boar's rough front with grisly terrors grac'd;
A spear he next assum'd, and pond'rous shield,
And led the Theban, issuing to the field.
Amid surrounding guards they pass'd unseen,
For night had stretch'd her friendly shade between;
Till nearer, thro' the gloom, the gate they knew;
The herald enter'd, and the chief withdrew:
But turning oft to Thebes his eager eyes,
The signal, on the tow'r, at last he spies;
A flaming torch, upon the top, expos'd,
Its ray at once his troubled mind compos'd:
Such joy he felt, as when a watch-tow'r's light,
Seen thro' the gloom of some tempestuous night,
Glads the wet mariner, a star to guide
His lab'ring vessel, thro' the stormy tide.

THE

THE
EPIGONIA D.

BOOK VII.

NOW silent night the middle space possess,
Of heav'n, or journey'd downwards to the west;
But Creon, still with thirst of vengeance fir'd,
Repose declin'd, nor from his toils respir'd;
But held his peers in council to debate
Plans for revenge suggested by his hate.
Before the king Dienices appear'd;
To speak his tidings sad, the hero fear'd;
Return'd from Oeta; thither sent to call
Alcides to protect his native wall.

AND Creon thus: Dienices! explain
Your sorrow; are our hopes of aid in vain?
Does Hercules neglect his native soil;
While strangers reap the harvest of his toil?
We from your silence cannot hope success;
But further ills your falling tears confess:
Cleon my son is dead; his fate you mourn;
I must not hope to see his safe return.

Sure

Sure, if he liv'd, he had not come the last;
But found his father with a filial haste.
His fate, at once, declare, you need not fear,
With any tale of grief, to wound mine ear,
Proof to misfortune: for the man, who knows,
The whole variety of human woes,
Can stand unmov'd tho' loads of sorrow press;
Practis'd to bear, familiar with distress.

THE monarch question'd thus; and thus the youth;
Too well thy boding fear has found the truth.
Cleon is dead; the hero's ashes lie
Where Pelion's lofty head ascends the sky.
For as, on Oeta's top, he vainly strove
To win the arrows of the son of Jove;
Compelling Philoctetes, to resign,
The friend of Hercules, his arms divine;
The insult to repel, an arrow flew,
And from his heart the vital current drew:
Prostrate he sunk; and welling from the wound,
A flood of gore impurpled all the ground.

THUS spoke Dienices. The king suppress
His big distress, and lock'd it in his breast:
Sighing he thus reply'd: The cause declare,
Which holds the great Alcides from the war;
And why another now, the bow commands
And arrows, sacred from his mighty hands.
Nor fear my valiant son's untimely fate,
With all its weight of sorrow, to relate:

All I can bear. Against my naked head,
 I see the vengeance of the gods decreed;
 With hostile arms beset my tott'ring reign;
 The people wasted, and my children slain.
 Attempts prove fruitless; ev'ry hope deceives;
 Success in prospect, disappointment gives:
 With swift approach, I see destruction come;
 But with a mind unmov'd, I'll meet my doom;
 Nor stain this war-worn visage with a tear,
 Since all that heav'n has purpos'd, I can bear.
 The monarch thus his rising grief suppress'd;
 And thus the peers Dienices address'd:

PRINCES of Thebes! and thou, whose sov'reign
 hand

Sways the dread sceptre of supreme command!
 To what I offer, lend an equal ear;
 The truth I'll speak, and judge me when you hear.
 If Cleon, by my fault, no more returns,
 For whom, her second hope, his country mourns;
 No doom I deprecate, no torture fly,
 Which justice can denounce, or rage supply:
 But if my innocence appears, I claim
 Your censure to escape, and public blame.

FROM Marathon by night our course we steer'd,
 And pass'd Gerastus when the day appear'd;
 Andros we saw, with promontories steep,
 Ascend; and Delos level with the deep.
 A circuit wide; for where Euripus roars
 Between Euboea and the Theban shores,

The

The Argives had dispos'd their naval train;
And prudence taught to shun the hostile plain,
Four days we sail'd; the fifth our voyage ends,
Where Oeta, sloping to the sea, descends.
The vales I search'd, and woody heights above,
Guided by fame, to find the son of Jove;
With Cleon only: for we charg'd the band
To stay, and guard our vessel on the strand.
In vain we search'd; but when the lamp of day
Approach'd the ocean with its setting ray,
A cave appear'd, which from a mountain steep,
Thro' a low valley, look'd into the deep.
Thither we turn'd our weary steps, and found
The cavern hung with savage spoils around;
The wolf's grey furr, the wild boar's shaggy hide,
The lion's mane, the panther's speckled pride:
These signs we mark'd; and knew the rocky seat,
Some solitary hunter's wild retreat.
Farther invited by a glimm'ring ray,
Which thro' the darkness shed uncertain day,
In the recesses of the cave we found
The club of Hercules; and wrapt around,
Which, seen before, we knew, the lion's spoils,
The mantle which he wore in all his toils.
Amaz'd we stood; in silence, each his mind
To fear and hope alternately resign'd:
With joy we hop'd to find the hero near;
The club and mantle found, dispos'd to fear.
His force invincible in fight we knew,
Which nought of mortal kind could e'er subdue,
But

But fear'd Apollo's might, or his who heaves
The solid earth, and rules the stormy waves.

POND'RING we stood; when on the roof above,
The tread of feet descending thro' the grove
Which crown'd the hollow cliff, amaz'd we heard;
And straight before the cave a youth appear'd.
A bleeding buck across his shoulders flung,
Ty'd with a rope of twisted rushes, hung.
He dropt his burden in the gate, and plac'd,
Against the pillar'd cliff, his bow unbrac'd.
'Twas then our footsteps in the cave he heard,
And thro' the gloom our shining arms appear'd.
His bow he bent; and backwards from the rock
Retir'd, and, of our purpose quest'ning, spoke:
Say who you are, who seek this wild abode,
Thro' desert paths, by mortals rarely trod?
If just, and with a fair intent you come,
Friendship expect, and safety in my dome:
But if for violence, your danger learn,
And trust my admonition when I warn:
Certain as fate, where'er this arrow flies,
The hapless wretch, who meets its fury, dies:
No buckler to resist its point avails,
The hammer'd cuirass yields, the breast-plate fails;
And where it once has drawn the purple gore,
No charm can cure, no med'cine health restore.

WITH threats he question'd thus; and Cléon said:
We come to call Alcides to our aid;

By

By us the senators of Thebes entreat
The hero, to protect his native state :
For hostile arms invest the Theban tow'rs ;
Famine within, without the sword, devours.
If you have learn'd where Hercules remains,
In mountain caves, or hamlets on the plains,
Our way direct ; for, led by gen'ral fame,
To find him in these desert wilds we came.

He spoke ; and Philoctetes thus again :
May Jove, for Thebes, some other aid ordain ;
For Hercules no more exerts his might,
Against oppressive force, for injur'd right :
Retir'd, among the gods, he sits serene,
And views, beneath him far, this mortal scene :
But enter now this grotto, and partake
What I can offer, for the hero's sake :
With you from sacred Thebes he claim'd his birth,
For god-like virtue fam'd thro' all the earth ;
Thebes therefore and her people still shall be,
Like fair Trachines and her sons to me.
Enter ; for now the doubtful twilight fails ;
And o'er the silent earth the night prevails :
From the moist valleys noxious fogs arise,
To wrap the rocky heights, and shade the skies.

THE cave we enter'd, and his bounty shar'd ;
A rural banquet by himself prepar'd.
But soon the rage of thirst and hunger stay'd,
My mind still doubtful, to the youth I said :

Must

Must hapless Thebes, despairing and undone,
Want the assistance of her bravest son?
The hero's fate explain, nor grudge mine ear
The sad assurance of our loss to hear.
I question'd thus. The youth, with horror pale,
Attempted to recite an awful tale;
Above the fabled woes which bards rehearse,
When sad Melpomene inspires the verse.

THE wife of Jove (Pæonides reply'd)
All arts in vain to crush the hero try'd;
For brighter from her hate his virtue burn'd;
And disappointed still, the Goddess mourn'd.
His ruin to effect at last she strove
By jealousy, the rage of injur'd love.
The bane to Deianira's breast convey'd,
Who, as a rival, fear'd th' Oechalian maid.
The Goddess knew, that jealous of her lord,
A robe she kept with latent poisons stor'd;
The centaur's gift, bequeath'd her, to reclaim
The hero's love, and light his dying flame;
If e'er, devoted to a stranger's charms,
He stray'd inconstant, from her widow'd arms;
But giv'n with treacherous intent to prove
The death of nature, not the life of love.
Mad from her jealousy, the charm she try'd;
His love to change, the deadly robe apply'd:
And, guiltless of the present which he bore,
Lychas convey'd it to Centaureum's shore:

G

Where

Where to the Pow'rs immortal, for their aid, ^{ed flud}
 A grateful hecatomb the hero paid: ^{the hero paid}
 When favor'd from above, his arm o'erthrew ^{ed of}
 The proud Eurytus, and his warriors slew. ^{the best of}
 The venom'd robe the hero took, nor fear'd ^{offsup}
 A gift by conjugal respects endear'd: ^{of detemina}
 And straight resign'd the lion's shaggy spoils, ^{is evoda}
 The mantle which he wore in all his toils. ^{but and W}
 No sign of harm the fatal present show'd;
 Till rous'd by heat its secret venom glow'd:
 Straight on the flesh it seiz'd, like stiffest glue,
 And scorching deep, to ev'ry member grew.
 Then tearing with his hands th' infernal snare,
 His skin he rent, and laid the muscles bare;
 While streams of blood, descending from the wound,
 Mix'd with the gore of victims on the ground.
 The guiltless Lychas, in his furious mood,
 He seiz'd, as trembling by his side he stood:
 Him, by the slender ancle snatch'd, he swung;
 And 'gainst a rocky promontory flung:
 Which, from the dire event, his name retains;
 Thro' his white locks impurpled rush'd the brains:
 Aw'd by the deed, his desp'rate rage to shun,
 Our bold companions from his presence run:
 I too, conceal'd behind a rock, remain'd;
 My love and sympathy by fear restrain'd;
 For furious 'midst the sacred fires he flew;
 The victims scatter'd, and the hearths o'erthrew.
 Then sinking prostrate, where a tide of gore
 From oxen slain had blacken'd all the shore,

His

His form divine he roll'd in dust and blood;
His groans the hills re-echo'd and the flood.
Then rising furious, to the ocean's streams
He rush'd, in hope to quench his raging flames;
But burning still the unextinguish'd pain,
The shore he left, and stretch'd into the main.
A galley anchor'd near the beach we found;
Her curled canvases to the breeze unbound;
And trac'd his desp'rate course, till far before
We saw him land on Oeta's desert shore.
Towards the skies his furious hands he rear'd,
And thus, across the deep, his voice we heard:

SOV'REIGN of heav'n and earth! whose boundless
sway

The fates of men and mortal things obey!
If e'er delighted from the courts above,
In human form, you sought Alcmena's love;
If fame's unchanging voice to all the earth,
With truth, proclaims you author of my birth;
Whence, from a course of spotless glory run,
Successful toils and wreaths of triumph won,
Am I thus wretched? better, that before
Some monster fierce had drunk my streaming gore;
Or crush'd by Cacus, foe to gods and men,
My batter'd brains had strew'd his rocky den:
Than, from my glorious toils and triumphs past,
To fall subdu'd by female arts, at last.
O cool my boiling blood, ye winds, that blow
From mountains loaded with eternal snow,

And crack the icy cliffs: in vain! in vain!
Your rigor cannot quench my raging pain!
For round this heart the furies wave their brands,
And wring my entrails with their burning hands.
Now bending from the skies, O wife of Jove!
Enjoy the vengeance of thy injur'd love:
For fate, by me, the Thund'rer's guilt atones;
And, punish'd in her son, Alcmena groans:
The object of your hate shall soon expire;
Fix'd on my shoulders preys a net of fire:
Whom nor the toils nor dangers could subdue,
By false Euryftheus dictated from you;
Nor tyrants lawless, nor the monstrous brood,
Which haunts the desert or infests the flood,
Nor Greece, nor all the barb'rous climes that lie
Where Phœbus ever points his golden eye;
A woman hath o'erthrown! ye gods! I yield
To female arts, unconquer'd in the field.
My arms—alas! are these the same that bow'd
Anteus, and his giant force subdu'd?
That dragg'd Nemea's monster from his den;
And slew the dragon in his native fen?
Alas, alas! their mighty muscles fail,
While pains infernal ev'ry nerve assail:
Alas, alas! I feel in streams of woe
These eyes diffus'd, before untaught to flow.
Awake my virtue, oft in dangers try'd,
Patient in toils, in deaths unterrify'd,
Rouse to my aid; nor let my labors pass,
With fame atchiev'd, be blotted by the last:

Firm

Firm and unmov'd, the present shock endure;
Once triumph, and for ever rest secure.

THE hero thus; and grasp'd a pointed rock
With both his arms, which straight in pieces broke,
Crush'd in his agony: then on his breast
Descending prostrate, further plaint supprest,
And now the clouds, in dusky volumes spread,
Had darken'd all the mountains with their shade:
The winds withhold their breath; the billows rest;
The sky's dark image on the deep impress,
A bay for shelter, op'ning in the strand,
We saw, and steer'd our vessel to the land.
Then mounting on the rocky beach above,
Thro' the thick gloom, descry'd the son of Jove,
His head, declin'd between his hands, he lean'd;
His elbows on his bended knees sustain'd,
Above him still a hov'ring vapor flew,
Which, from his boiling veins, the garment drew.
Thro' the thick woof we saw the fumes aspire;
Like smoke of victims from the sacred fire.
Compassion's keenest touch my bosom thrill'd;
My eyes, a flood of melting sorrow fill'd:
Doubtful I stood; and pond'ring in my mind,
By fear, and pity, variously inclin'd,
Whether to shun the hero, or essay,
With friendly words, his torment to allay:
When bursting from above with hideous glare,
A flood of lightning kindled all the air.

From Oeta's top it rush'd in sudden streams ;
The ocean redden'd at its fiery beams.
Then, bellowing deep, the thunder's awful sound
Shook the firm mountains and the shores around.
Far to the east it roll'd, a length of sky ;
We heard Eubœa's rattling cliffs reply,
As at his master's voice a swain appears,
When wak'd from sleep his early call he hears,
'The hero rose ; and to the mountain turn'd,
Whose cloud-involved top with lightning burn'd :
And thus his fire address'd : With patient mind,
Thy call I hear, obedient and resign'd ;
Faithful and true the oracle ! which spoke,
In high Dodona, from the sacred oak ;
" That twenty years of painful labors past,
" On Oeta's top I should repose at last :"
Before, involv'd, the meaning lay conceal'd ;
But now I find it in my fate reveal'd.
Thy sov'reign will I blame not, which denies,
With length of days, to crown my victories :
Tho' still with danger and distress engag'd,
For injur'd right eternal war I wag'd ;
A life of pain, in barb'rous climates, led,
The heav'n's my canopy, a rock my bed :
More joy I've felt than delicacy knows,
Or all the pride of regal pomp bestows.
Dread fire ! thy will I honor and revere,
And own thy love with gratitude sincere,
Which watch'd me in my toils, that none could boast
To raise a trophy from my glory lost :

And

And tho' at last, by female arts, o'ercome,
And unsuspected fraud, I find my doom;
There to have fail'd, my honor ne'er can shake,
Where vice is only strong and virtue weak.

HE said; and turning to the cloudy height,
The seat of thunder, wrapt in sable night,
Firm and undaunted trod the steep ascent;
An earthquake rock'd the mountain as he went.
Back from the shaking shores retir'd the flood;
In horror lost, my bold companions stood,
To speech or motion: but the present pow'r
Of love inspir'd me, in that awful hour;
With trembling steps, I trac'd the son of Jove;
And saw him darkly on the steep above,
Thro' the thick gloom. The thunder's awful noise
Ceas'd; and I call'd him thus with feeble voice:
O son of mighty Jove! thy friend await;
Who comes to comfort thee, or share thy fate.
In ev'ry danger and distress before,
His part your faithful Philoctetes bore.
O let me still attend you, and receive
The comfort which a present friend can give,
Who come obsequious for your last commands,
And tenders to your need his willing hands.

MY voice he heard; and from the mountain's brow
Saw me ascending on the steep below.
To favor my approach his steps he stay'd;
And pleas'd, amidst his anguish, smiling said:

Approach, my Philoctetes ! Oft I've known
Your friendly zeal in former labors shown :
The present, more than all, your love proclaims,
Which braves the Thund'rer's bolts and volley'd
flames ;

With daring step, the rocking earthquake treads,
While the firm mountains shake their trembling heads.
As my last gift, these arrows, with the bow,
Accept ; the greatest which I can bestow ;
My glory all my wealth ; of pow'r to raise
Your name to honor and immortal praise ;
If for wrong'd innocence your shafts shall fly,
As Jove by signs directs them from the sky.

STRAIGHT from his mighty shoulders, as he spoke,
He loos'd and lodg'd them in a cavern'd rock ;
To lie untouch'd, till future care had drain'd
Their poison from the venom'd robe retain'd.
And thus again : The only aid I need,
For all my favours past, the only need,
Is, that, with vengeful hand, you fix a dart
In cruel Deianira's faithless heart :
Her treach'rous messenger already dead,
Let her, the author of his crime, succeed.
This awful scene forsake without delay ;
In vain to mingle with my fate you stay :
No kind assistance can my state retrieve,
Nor any friend attend me, and survive.

THE hero thus his tender care exprest,
And spread his arms to clasp me to his breast;
But soon withdrew them, lest his tainted veins
Infection had convey'd and mortal pains:
Silent I stood in streams of sorrow drown'd,
Till from my heart these words a passage found:
O bid me not forsake thee, nor impose
What wretched Philoctetes must refuse.
By him I swear, whose presence now proclaim
The thunder's awful voice and forked flame,
Beneath whose steps the trembling desert quakes,
And earth affrighted to her center shakes;
I never will forsake thee, but remain
While struggling life these ruin'd limbs retain:
No form of fate shall drive me from thy side,
Nor death with all its terrors e'er divide;
Tho' the same stroke our mortal lives should end,
One flash consume us, and our ashes blend.

I SPOKE; and to the cloudy steep we turn'd;
Along its brow the kindled forest burn'd.
The savage brood, descending to the plains,
The scatter'd flocks and dread distracted swains,
Rush'd from the shaking cliffs: we saw them come,
In wild disorder mingled, thro' the gloom.
And now appear'd the desert's lofty head,
A narrow rock with forest thinly spread.
His mighty hands display'd aloft in air,
To Jove the hero thus address'd a pray'r:

Hear me, dread Pow'r! whose nod controls the skies,
At whose command the winged lightning flies :
Almighty fire! if yet you deign to own
Alcmena's wretched offspring as your son ;
Some comfort in my agony impart,
And bid thy forked thunder rend this heart :
Round my devoted head it idly plays ;
And aids the fire, which wastes me, with its rays :
By heat inflam'd, this robe exerts its pow'r,
My scorched limbs to shrivel and devour ;
Upon my shoulders, like a dragon, clings,
And fixes in my flesh a thousand stings.
Great fire! in pity to my suit attend,
And with a sudden stroke my being end.

As thus the hero pray'd, the lightning ceas'd,
And thicker darkness all the hill embrac'd.
He saw his suit deny'd : in fierce despair,
The rooted pines he tore, and cedars fair ;
And from the crannies of the rifted rocks,
Twisted with force immense the stubborn oaks.
Of these upon the cliff a heap he laid,
And thus address'd me, as I stood dismay'd :
Behold, my friend! the ruler of the skies,
In agony invok'd, my suit denies :
But sure the oracle inspir'd from heaven,
Which in Dodona's sacred grove was given,
The truth declar'd; " that now my toils shall cease,
" And all my painful labors end in peace :"

Peace,

Peace, death can only bring: the raging smart,
Warp't with my vitals, mocks each healing art.
Not all the plants that clothe the verdant field,
Not all the health a thousand mountains yield,
Which on their tops the sage physician finds,
Or digging from the veins of flint unbinds,
This fire can quench. And therefore, to obey
My last commands, prepare without delay.
When on this pile you see my limbs compos'd,
Shrink not, but hear what must not be oppos'd;
Approach, and, with an unrelenting hand,
Fix, in the boughs beneath, a flaming brand.
I must not longer trust this madding pain,
Lest some rash deed should all my glory stain.
Lychas I slew upon the Cœnian shore,
Who knew not, sure, the fatal gift he bore:
His guilt had taught him else to fly, nor wait,
Till from my rage he found a sudden fate.
I will not Deianira's action blame;
Let heav'n decide, which only knows her aim:
Whether from hate, with treacherous intent,
This fatal garment to her lord she sent;
Or, by the cunning of a foe betray'd,
His vengeance, thus imprudently convey'd.
If this, or that, I urge not my command,
Nor claim her fate from thy avenging hand:
To lodge my lifeless bones, is all I crave,
Safe and uninjur'd in the peaceful grave.

THIS with a hollow voice and alter'd look,
In agony extreme, the hero spoke.
I pour'd a flood of sorrow, and withdrew,
Amid the kindled groves, to pluck a bough;
With which the structure at the base I fir'd:
On ev'ry side the pointed flames aspir'd.
But ere involving smoke the pile inclos'd,
I saw the hero on the top repos'd;
Serene as one who, near the fountain laid,
At noon enjoys the cool refreshing shade.
The venom'd garment hiss'd; its touch the fires
Avoiding, slop'd oblique their pointed spires:
On ev'ry side the parted flame withdrew,
And level'd, round the burning structure, flew.
At last victorious to the top they rost;
Firm and unmov'd the hero saw them close.
His soul, unfetter'd, fought the blest abodes,
By virtue rais'd to mingle with the gods.
His bones in earth, with pious hands, I laid;
The place to publish nothing shall persuade;
Lest tyrants, now unaw'd, and men unjust,
With insults, should profane his sacred dust.
E'er since, I haunt this solitary den,
Retir'd from all the busy paths of men;
For these wild mountains only suit my state,
And sooth, with kindred gloom, my deep regret.

He ended thus: amazement long suppress'd
My voice; but Cleon answer'ing thus address'd:

Brave

Brave youth! you offer, to our wond'ring ears,
Events more awful than tradition bears.
Fix'd in my mind the hero's fate remains,
I see his agonies, and feel his pains.
Yet suffer, that for hapless Thebes I mourn,
Whose fairest hopes the envious fates o'erturn.
If great Alcides liv'd, her towers should stand
Safe and protected by his mighty hand:
On you, brave youth! our second hopes depend;
To you the arms of Hercules descend.
He did not, sure, those glorious gifts bestow,
The shafts invincible, the mighty bow;
From which the innocent protection claim,
To dye the hills with blood of savage game.
Such toils as these your glory ne'er can raise,
Nor crown your merit with immortal praise;
And with the great Alcides place your name,
To stand distinguish'd in the rolls of fame.

THE hero thus. The son of Pœan said:
Myself, my arms, I offer for your aid;
If fav'ring from the skies, the signs of Jove
Confirm what thus I purpose and approve.
For when Alcides, with his last commands,
His bow and shafts committed to my hands;
In all attempts he charg'd me to proceed
As Jove by signs and auguries should lead.
But these the rising sun will best disclose;
The season now invites to soft repose.

He

He said; and, from the hearth a flaming bough,
To light us thro' the shady cavern, drew.
Far in the deep recess, a rocky bed
We found, with skins of mountain monsters spread.
There we compos'd our weary limbs, and lay,
Till darkness fled before the morning ray.
Then rose, and climb'd a promontory steep,
Whose rocky brow, impending o'er the deep,
Shoots high into the air, and lifts the eye,
In boundless stretch, to take a length of sky.
With hands extended to th' ethereal height,
The pow'r we call'd, who rules the realms of light;
That symbols sure his purpose might explain,
Whether the youth should aid us, or refrain:
We pray'd; and on the left along the vales,
With pinions broad display'd, an eagle sails.
As near the ground his level flight he drew,
He stoop'd, and brush'd the thickets as he flew;
When, starting from the center of a brake,
With horrid hiss appear'd a crested snake:
Her young to guard, her venom'd fangs she rear'd;
Above the shrubs her wavy length appear'd;
Against his swift approaches, as he flew,
On ev'ry side her forked tongue she threw,
And armed jaws; but wheeling from the snare
The swift assailant still escap'd in air;
But, stooping from his pitch, at last he tore
Her purple crest, and drew a stream of gore.
She wreath'd; and, in the fierceness of her pain,
Shook the long thickets with her twisted train:

Relax'd

Relax'd at last, its spires forgot to roll,
And, in a hiss, she breath'd her fiery soul:
In haste to gorge his prey, the bird of Jove
Down to the bottom of the thicket drove;
The young defenceless from the covert drew;
Devour'd them straight, and to the mountains flew.
This omen seen, another worse we hear;
The subterraneous thunder greets our ear:
The worst of all the signs which augurs know;
A dire prognostic of impending woe.

AMAZ'D we stood, till Philoctetes broke
Our long dejected silence thus, and spoke:
Warriors of Thebes! the auguries dissuade
My purpose, and withhold me from your aid;
Tho' pity moves me, and ambition draws,
To share your labors and assert your cause;
In fight the arms of Hercules to show,
And from his native ramparts drive the foe.
But vain it is against the gods to strive;
Whose counsels ruin nations or retrieve;
Without their favor, valor nought avails,
And human prudence self-subverted fails;
For irresistibly their pow'r presides
In all events, and good and ill divides.
Let Thebes assembled at the altars wait,
And long processions crowd each sacred gate:
With sacrifice appeas'd, and humble pray'r,
Their omens frustrated, the gods may spare.

To

To-day, my guests, repose; to-morrow sail,
If heav'n propitious sends a prosp'rous gale:
For, shifting to the south, the western breeze
Forbids you now to trust the faithless seas.

THE hero thus; in silence sad, we mourn'd;
And to the solitary cave return'd,
Despairing of success; our grief he shar'd,
And for relief a chearing bowl prepar'd;
'The vintage which the grape spontaneous yields,
By art untutor'd, on the woodland fields,
He sought with care, and mingled in the bowl,
A plant, of pow'r to calm the troubled soul;
Its name Nepenthe; swains, on desert ground,
Do often glean it, else but rarely found;
This in the bowl he mix'd; and soon we found,
In soft oblivion, all our sorrows drown'd:
We felt no more the agonies of care,
And hope, succeeding, dawn'd upon despair.
From morn we feasted, till the setting ray
Retir'd, and ev'ning shades expell'd the day;
Then in the dark recesses of the cave,
To slumbers soft, our willing limbs we gave:
But ere the morning, from the east, appear'd,
And sooner than the early lark is heard,
Cleon awak'd, my careless slumber broke,
And bending to my ear, in whispers spoke:
Dienices! while slumbering thus secure,
We think not what our citizens endure.

The

The worst the signs have threaten'd, nought appears
 With happier aspect to dispel our fears;
 Alcides lives not, and his friend in vain
 To arms we call, while auguries restrain:
 Returning thus, we bring the Theban state
 But hopes deceiv'd, and omens of her fate:
 Better success our labors shall attend,
 Nor all our aims in disappointment end;
 If you approve my purpose, nor dissuade
 What now I counsel for your country's aid.
 Soon as the sun displays his early beam,
 The arms of great Alcides let us claim;
 Then for Bœotia's shores direct our sails;
 And force must second if persuasion fails:
 Against reproach necessity shall plead;
 Censure confute, and justify the deed.

THE hero thus, and ceas'd: with pity mov'd,
 And zeal for Thebes, I rashly thus approv'd.
 You counsel well; but prudence would advise
 To work by cunning rather, and surprize;
 Than force declar'd; his venom'd shafts you know,
 Which fly resistless from th' Herculean bow;
 A safe occasion now the silent hour
 Of midnight yields; when, by the gentle pow'r
 Of careless slumber bound, the hero lies,
 Our necessary fraud will 'scape his eyes;
 Without the aid of force shall reach its aim,
 With danger less incur'd, and less of blame.

I coun-

I COUNSEL'D thus; and Cleon straight approv'd.
In silence from the dark recess we mov'd;
Towards the hearth, with wary steps, we came,
The ashes stir'd, and rous'd the slumb'ring flame.
On ev'ry side in vain we turn'd our eyes,
Nor, as our hopes had promis'd, found the prize:
Till to the couch, where Philoctetes lay,
The quiver led us by its silver ray;
For in a panther's furr together ty'd,
His bow and shafts, the pillow's place supply'd:
Thither I went with careful steps and slow;
And by degrees obtain'd th' Herculean bow:
The quiver next to disengage essay'd;
It stuck intangled, but at last obey'd.
The prize obtain'd, we hasten to the strand,
And rouse the mariners, and straight command
The canvass to unfurl: a gentle gale
Favor'd our course, and fill'd the swelling sail:
The shores retir'd; and when the morning ray
Ascended, from the deep, th' ethereal way;
Upon the right Cænæum's beach appear'd,
And Pelion on the left his summit rear'd.
All day we sail'd; but when the setting light
Approach'd the ocean, from th' Olympian height,
The breeze was hush'd; and, stretch'd across the main,
Like mountains rising on the wat'ry plain,
The clouds collected on the billows stood,
And, with incumbent shade, obscur'd the flood.
Thither a current bore us; soon we found
A night of vapor closing fast around.

Loose hung the empty fail: we ply'd our oars,
And strove to reach Eubœa's friendly shores;
But strove in vain: for erring from the course,
In mazes wide, the rower spent his force.
Seven days and nights we try'd some port to gain,
Where Greek or barb'rous shores exclude the main;
But knew not, whether backwards, or before,
Or on the right, or left, to seek the shore:
Till, rising on the eighth, a gentle breeze
Drove the light fog, and brush'd the curling seas.
Our canvass to its gentle pow'r we spread;
And fix'd our oars, and follow'd as it led.
Before us soon, impending from above,
Thro' parting clouds, we saw a lofty grove.
Alarm'd, the sail we slacken, and explore
The deeps and shallows of the unknown shore.
Near on the right a winding creek appear'd,
Thither, directed by the pole, we steer'd;
And landed on the beach, by fate misled,
Nor knew again the port from which we fled.
The gods themselves deceiv'd us: to our eyes
New caverns open, airy cliffs arise;
That Philoctetes might again possess
His arms, and heav'n our injury redress.

THE unknown region purpos'd to explore,
Cleon, with me alone, forsakes the shore;
Back to the cave we left, by angry fate
Implicitly conducted, at the gate
The injur'd youth we found; a thick disguise
His native form conceal'd, and mock'd our eyes;

For

For the black locks in waving ringlets spread,
A wreath of hoary white involv'd his head,
Beneath a load of years, he seem'd to bend,
His breast to sink, his shoulders to ascend.
He saw us straight, and, rising from his seat,
Began with sharp reproaches to repeat
Our crime; but could not thus suspicion give;
So strong is error when the gods deceive!
We question'd of the country as we came,
By whom inhabited, and what its name;
How far from Thebes: that thither we were bound;
And thus the wary youth our error found.
Smooth'd to deceive, his accent straight he turn'd,
While in his breast the thirst of vengeance burn'd;
And thinking now his bow and shafts regain'd,
Reply'd with hospitable kindness feign'd:
On Ida's sacred height, my guests! you stand;
Here Priam rules, in peace, a happy land.
Twelve cities own him, on the Phrygian plain,
Their lord, and twelve fair islands on the main.
From hence to Thebes in seven days space you'll sail,
If Jove propitious sends a prosp'rous gale.
But now accept a homely meal, and deign
To share, what heav'n affords a humble swain.

He said; and brought a bowl with vintage fill'd,
From berries wild, and mountain grapes distill'd,
Of largeft size; and plac'd it on a rock,
Under the covert of a spreading oak;

Around

Around it autumn's mellow stores he laid,
Which the sun ripens, in the woodland shade.
Our thirst and hunger thus at once allay'd,
To Cleon turning, Philoctetes said:
The bow you wear of such unusual size,
With wonder still I view and curious eyes;
For length, for thickness, and the workman's art,
Surpassing all I've seen in ev'ry part.

DISSEMBLING, thus inquir'd the wary youth,
And thus your valiant son declar'd the truth:
Father! the weapon, which you thus commend,
The force of great Alcides once did bend;
These shafts the same which monsters fierce subdu'd,
And lawless men with vengeance just pursu'd.

THE hero thus; and Pœan's son again:
What now I ask, refuse not to explain:
Whether the hero still exerts his might,
For innocence oppress'd, and injur'd right?
Or yields to fate; and with the mighty dead,
From toil reposes in the Elysian shade!
Sure, if he liv'd, he would not thus forgoe
His shafts invincible and mighty bow,
By which, he oft immortal honor gain'd
For wrongs redress'd and lawless force restrain'd.

THE rage suppress'd, which in his bosom burn'd,
He question'd thus; and Cleon thus return'd:
What we have heard of Hercules, I'll show;
What by report we learn'd, and what we know.

From

From Thebes to Oeta's wilderness we went,
With supplications, to the hero, sent
From all our princes; that he would exert
His matchless valor on his country's part,
Against whose state united foes conspire,
And waste her wide domain with sword and fire.
There on the cliffs, which bound the neighb'ring main,
We found the mansion of a lonely swain;
Much like to this, but that its rocky mouth
The cooling north respects, as this the south;
And, in a corner of the cave conceal'd,
The club which great Alcides us'd to wield.
Wrapt in his shaggy robe, the lion's spoils,
The mantle which he wore in all his toils.
At ev'n a hunter in the cave appear'd;
From whom the fate of Hercules we heard.
He told us that he saw the chief expire,
That he himself did light his fun'ral fire;
And boasted, that the hero had resign'd,
To him, this bow and quiver, as his friend:
Oft seen before, these deadly shafts we know,
And tip'd with stars of gold th' Herculean bow:
But of the hero's fate, the tale he told,
Whether 'tis true, I cannot now unfold.

He spoke. The youth with indignation burn'd,
Yet calm in outward semblance, thus return'd:
I must admire the man who could resign
To you, these arms so precious and divine,
Which, to the love of such a friend, he ow'd,
Great was the gift if willingly bestow'd:

By

By force they could not easily be gain'd,
And fraud; I know, your gen'rous souls disdain'd.

SEVERELY smiling, thus the hero spoke;
With conscious shame we heard, nor silence broke:
And thus again: The only boon I claim,
Which, to your host deny'd, would merit blame;
Is, that my hands that weapon may embrace,
And on the flaxen cord an arrow place;
An honor which I covet; tho' we mourn'd,
By great Alcides, once our state o'erturn'd:
When proud Laomedon the hero brav'd,
Nor paid the ransom for his daughter sav'd.

DISSEMBLING thus, did Philoctetes strive
His instruments of vengeance to retrieve:
And, by the fates deceiv'd, in evil hour,
The bow and shafts we yielded to his pow'r,
In mirthful mood, provoking him to try
Whether the weapon would his force obey;
For weak he seem'd, like those whose nerves have lost,
Thro' age, the vigor which in youth they boast.
The belt around his shoulders first he flung,
And glitt'ring by his side the quiver hung:
Compress'd with all his force the stubborn yew
He bent, and from the case an arrow drew:
And yielding to his rage, in furious mood,
With aim direct against us full he stood,
For vengeance arm'd; and now the thick disguise,
Which veil'd his form before, and mock'd our eyes,
Vanish'd

Vanish'd in air; our error then appear'd;
I saw the vengeance of the gods, and fear'd.
Before him to the ground my knees I bow'd,
And, with extended hands, for mercy su'd.
But Cleon, fierce and scorning to intreat,
His weapon drew, and rush'd upon his fate:
For as he came, the fatal arrow flew,
And from his heart the vital current drew;
Supine he fell; and, welling from the wound,
A tide of gore impurpled all the ground.
The son of Pœan stooping drew the dart,
Yet warm with slaughter, from the hero's heart;
And turn'd it full on me: with humble pray'r
And lifted hands, I mov'd him still to spare.
At last he yielded, from his purpose sway'd,
And answer'ing thus in milder accents, said:
No favor, sure, you merit; and the cause,
Of right infring'd and hospitable laws,
Would justify revenge; but as you claim,
With Hercules, your native soil the same;
I now shall pardon for the hero's sake,
Nor, tho' the gods approve it, vengeance take.
But straight avoid my presence, and unbind,
With speed, your flying canvals to the wind:
For if again to meet these eyes you come,
No pray'rs shall change, or mitigate your doom.

WITH frowning aspect thus the hero said.
His threats I fear'd, and willingly obey'd.

Straight

Straight in his purple robe the dead I bound,
Then to my shoulders rais'd him from the ground;
And from the hills descending to the bay,
Where anchor'd near the beach our galley lay,
The rest conven'd, with sorrow to relate
This anger of the gods and Cleon's fate:
The hero's fate his bold companions mourn'd,
And ev'ry breast with keen resentment burn'd.
They in their heady transports straight decreed,
His fall with vengeance to requite or bleed.
I fear'd the angry gods; and gave command,
With sail and oar, to fly the fatal strand;
Inrag'd and sad, the mariners obey'd,
Unfurl'd the canvass, and the anchor weigh'd.
Our course, behind, the western breezes sped,
And from the coast with heavy hearts we fled.
All day they favour'd, but with ev'ning ceas'd;
And straight a tempest, from the stormy east,
In opposition full, began to blow,
And rear in ridges high the deep below.
Against its boist'rous sway in vain we strove;
Obliquely to the Thracian coast we drove:
Where Pelion lifts his head aloft in air,
With pointed cliffs and precipices bare;
Thither our course we steer'd, and on the strand
Descending, fix'd our cable to the land.
There twenty days we stay'd, and wish'd, in vain,
A favorable breeze, to cross the main;
For with unceasing rage the tempest rav'd,
And o'er the rocky beach the ocean heav'd.

At last with care the hero's limbs we burn'd,
And, water'd with our tears, his bones inurn'd.
There, where a promontory's height divides,
Extended in the deep, the parted tides,
His tomb is seen, which, from its airy stand,
Marks to the mariner the distant land.

THIS, princes! is the truth; and tho' the will
Of heav'n, the sov'reign cause of good and ill,
Has dash'd our hopes, and, for the good in view,
With griefs afflicts us and disasters new:
Yet, innocent of all, I justly claim
To stand exempt from punishment, or blame.
That zeal for Thebes 'gainst hospitable laws
Prevail'd, and ardor in my country's cause,
I freely have confess'd; but sure, if wrong
Was e'er-permitted to inducement strong,
This claims to be excus'd: our country's need,
With all who hear it, will for favor plead.

He ended thus. Unable to subdue
His grief, the monarch from the throne withdrew:
In silent wonder fix'd, the rest remain'd;
Till Clytophon the gen'ral sense explain'd:
Your just defence, we mean not to refuse;
Your prudence censure, or your zeal accuse:
To heav'n we owe the valiant Cleon's fate,
With each disaster which afflicts the state.
Soon as the sun forsakes the eastern main,
At ev'ry altar let a bull be slain;

And

And Thebes assembled move the pow'rs to spare,
With vows of sacrifice and humble pray'r:
But now the night invites to soft repose,
The momentary cure of human woes;
The stars descend; and soon the morning ray
Shall rouse us to the labors of the day.
The hero thus. In silence all approv'd,
And rising, various, from th' assembly mov'd.

H 2

THE

And I have attended more the power to that;

With vows of fidelity and humble prayer.

But now the night invites to rest.

The mounting care of human wood

The first dividend; and from the morning ray

Shall route us to the harbor of the day.

The hero thus, in silence all approved,

And this is the reason why I have not been able to do so.

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THE
EPIGONIAD.

BOOK VIII.

BEHIND the palace, where a stream descends,
Its lonely walks a shady grove extends;
Once sacred, now for common use ordain'd,
By war's wide licence and the ax profan'd:
Thither the monarch, from th' assembly, went
Alone, his fury and despair to vent,
And thus to heav'n: Dread Pow'r! whose sov'reign
sway
The fates of men and mortal things obey!
From me expect not such applause to hear;
As fawning vot'ries to thine altars bear;
But truth severe. Altho' the forked brand,
Which for destruction arms thy mighty hand,
Were level'd at my head; a mind I hold,
By present ills, or future, uncontrol'd.
Beneath thy sway, the race of mortals groan;
Felicity sincere is felt by none:
Delusive hope th' unpractis'd mind assails,
And, by ten thousand treach'rous arts, prevails:

Thro' all the earth the fair deceiver strays,
 And wretched man to misery betrays.
 Our crimes you punish, never teach to shun,
 When, blind from folly, on our fate we run :
 Hence sighs and groans thy tyrant reign confess,
 With ev'ry rueful symptom of distress.
 Here war unchain'd exerts his wasteful pow'r ;
 Here famine pines, diseases there devour,
 And lead a train of all the ills that know
 To shorten life, or lengthen it in woe.
 All men are curst ; but I, above the rest,
 With tenfold vengeance, for my crimes, oppress :
 With hostile pow'rs beset my tottering reign,
 The people wasted, and my children slain ;
 In swift approach, I see destruction come,
 But, with a mind unmov'd, I'll meet my doom ;
 For know, stern Pow'r ! whose vengeance has decreed
 That Creon, after all his sons, should bleed ;
 As from the summit of some desert rock,
 The sport of tempests, falls the leafless oak,
 Of all its honors stript, thou ne'er shalt find,
 Weakly submits, or stupidly resign'd
 This dauntless heart ; but purpos'd to debate
 Thy stern decrees, and burst the chains of fate.

He said ; and turning where the heralds stand
 All night by turns, and wait their lord's command ;
 Menestheus there and Hegesander found,
 And Phæmius sage, for valor once renown'd ;

He charg'd them thus : Beyond the eastern tow'rs,
Summon to meet in arms our martial pow'rs.
In silence let them move ; let signs command,
And mute obedience reign thro' ev'ry band ;
For when the east with early twilight glows,
We rush, from cover'd ambush, on our foes
Secure and unprepar'd : the truce we swore,
Our plighted faith, the seal of wine, and gore,
No ties I hold ; all piety disclaim :
Adverse to me the gods, and I to them.
The angry monarch thus his will declar'd ;
His rage the heralds fear'd, and straight repair'd
To rouse the warriors. Now the morning light
Begins to mingle with the shades of night :
In ev'ry street a glitt'ring stream appears,
Of polish'd helmets mix'd with shining spears :
Towards the eastern gate they drive along,
Nations and tribes, an undistinguish'd throng :
Creon himself superior, in his car,
Receiv'd them coming, and dispos'd the war.

AND now the Argives from their tents proceed,
With rites sepulchral, to intomb the dead.
The king of men, amid the fun'ral fires,
The chiefs assembles, and the work inspires.
And thus the Pylian sage, in counsel wise :
Princes ! I view, with wonder and surprize,
Yon field abandon'd, where the foe pursu'd
Their fun'ral rites before, with toil renew'd :

Not half their dead interr'd, they now abstain,
And silence reigns thro' all the smoaky plain :
Thence jealousy and fear possess my mind
Of faith infrig'd, and treachery design'd :
Behind those woody heights, behind those tow'rs,
I dread, in ambush laid, the Theban pow'rs ;
With purpose to assault us, when they know
That we, confiding, least expect a foe :
Let half the warriors arm, and stand prepar'd,
From sudden violence, the host to guard ;
While, in the mournful rites, the rest proceed,
Due to the honor'd reliques of the dead.

Thus as he spoke ; approaching from afar,
The hostile pow'rs, embattled for the war,
Appear'd ; and streaming from their polish'd shields
A blaze of splendor brighten'd all the fields.
And thus the king of men, with lifted eyes,
And both his hands extended to the skies :
Ye Pow'rs supreme ! whose unresisted sway
The fate of men and mortal things obey !
Let all the plagues, which perjury attend,
At once, and sudden, on our foes descend ;
Let not the sacred seal of wine and gore,
The hands we plighted, and the oaths we swore,
Be now in vain ; but, from your bright abodes,
Confound the bold despisers of the gods.

He pray'd ; and nearer came the hostile train,
With swift approach advancing on the plain ;

Em.

Embattled thick; as when, at fall of night,
 A shepherd, from some promontory's height,
 Approaching from the deep, a fog descries,
 Which hov'ring lightly o'er the billows flies;
 By breezes borne, the solid soon it gains,
 Climbs the steep hills, and darkens all the plains:
 Silent and swift the Theban pow'rs drew near;
 The chariots led, a phalanx clos'd the rear.

CONFUSION straight thro' all the host arose,
 Stir'd like the ocean when a tempest blows.
 Some arm for fight; the rest to terror yield,
 Inactive stand, or trembling quit the field.
 On ev'ry side, assaults the deafen'd ear
 The discord loud of tumult, rage, and fear.
 Superior in his car, with ardent eyes,
 The king of men thro' all the army flies;
 The rash restrains, the cold with courage fires,
 And all with hope and confidence inspires;
 As when the deep, in liquid mountains hurl'd,
 Assaults the rocky limits of the world;
 When tempests with unlicenc'd fury rave,
 And sweep from shore to shore the flying wave;
 If he, to whom each pow'r of ocean bends,
 To quell such uproar, from the deep ascends,
 Serene, amidst the wat'ry war, he rides,
 And fixes, with his voice, the moving tides:
 Such seem'd the monarch. From th' Olympian height,
 The martial maid precipitates her flight;

To aid her fav'rite host the goddess came,
 Mentor she seem'd, her radiant arms the same;
 Who with Ulysses brought a chosen band
 Of warriors from the Cephalelian strand;
 Already arm'd the valiant youth she found,
 And arming for the fight his warriors round.
 And thus began: Brave prince! our foes appear
 For battle order'd, and the fight is near;
 Dauntless they come superior and elate,
 While fear unmans us, and resigns to fate;
 Would some immortal from th' Olympian height
 Descend, and for a moment stop the fight;
 From sad dejection rous'd, and cold despair,
 We yet might arm us, and for war prepare;
 But if on human aid we must depend,
 Nor hope to see the fav'ring gods descend,
 Great were the hero's praise, who now could boast
 From ruin imminent to save the host;
 The danger near some prompt expedient claims,
 And prudence triumphs oft in worst extremes.

Thus, in a form assum'd, the martial maid;
 The generous warrior, thus replying, said:
 In youth, I cannot hope to win the praise;
 With which experience crowns a length of days:
 Weak are the hopes, that on my counsels stand,
 To combats new, nor practis'd in command:
 But as the gods, to save a sinking state,
 Or snatch an army from the jaws of fate,

When

When prudence stands confounded, oft suggest
A prompt expedient to some vulgar breast;
To your discerning ear I shall expose
What now my mind excites me to disclose.
Sav'd from th' unfinish'd honors of the slain,
The mingled spoils of forests load the plain;
In heaps contiguous, round the camp they lie,
A fence too weak to stop the enemy:
But if we mix them with the seeds of fire,
Which unextinguish'd glow in ev'ry pyre,
Against the foe a sudden wall shall rise,
Of flame and smoke ascending to the skies:
The steed dismay'd shall backward hurl the car;
Mix with the phalanx, and confound the war.

HE said. The Goddess, in her conscious breast,
A mother's triumph for a son possess'd,
Who emulates his sire in glorious deeds,
And, with his virtue, to his fame succeeds:
Graceful the Goddess turn'd, and with a voice,
Bold, and superior to the vulgar noise,
O'er all the field commands the woods to fire;
Straight to obey a thousand hands conspire.
On ev'ry side the spreading flame extends,
And, roll'd in cloudy wreaths, the smoke ascends.

CREON beheld; inrag'd to be withstood;
Like some fierce lion when he meets a flood
Or trench defensive, which his rage restrains
For flocks unguarded, left by careless swains;

O'er all the field he sends his eyes afar,
To mark fit entrance for a pointed war :
Near on the right a narrow space he found,
Where fun'ral ashes smok'd upon the ground :
Thither the warriors of the Theban host,
Whose martial skill he priz'd and valor most,
The monarch sent, Chalcidamus the strong,
Who from fair Thespia led his martial throng,
Where Helicon erects his verdant head,
And crowns the champaign with a lofty shade :
Oechalia's chief was added to the band,
For valor fam'd and skilful in command ;
Erithæus, with him, his brother, came,
Of worth unequal, and unequal fame.
Rhefus, with these, the Thracian leader, went,
To merit fame, by high atchievements, bent ;
Of stature tall, he scorns the pointed spear,
And crushes with his mace the ranks of war :
With him twelve leaders of his native train,
In combats, taught the bounding steed to rein,
By none surpass'd who boast superior skill
To send the winged arrow swift to kill,
Mov'd to the fight. The rest of vulgar name,
Tho' brave in combat, were unknown to fame.

THEIR bold invasion dauntless to oppose,
Full in the midst, the bulk of Ajax rose ;
Unarm'd he stood ; but, in his mighty hand,
Brandish'd, with gesture fierce, a burning brand,

Snatch'd

Snatch'd from the ashes of a fun'ral fire;
An olive's trunk, five cubit lengths entire.
Arm'd for the fight, the Cretan monarch stood;
And Merion, thirsting still for hostile blood;
The prince of Ithaca, with him who led
The youth, in Sycion, and Pellene, bred,
But ere they clos'd, the Thracian leader prest,
With eager courage, far before the rest;
Him Ajax met, inflam'd with equal rage:
Between the wond'ring hosts the chiefs engage;
Their weighty weapons round their heads they throw,
And swift, and heavy falls each thund'ring blow;
As when in Ætna's caves the giant brood,
The one-ey'd servants of the Lemnian god,
In order round the burning anvil stand,
And forge, with weighty strokes, the forked brand:
The shaking hills their fervid toil confess,
And echoes rattling thro' each dark recess:
So rag'd the fight; their mighty limbs they strain;
And oft their pond'rous maces fall in vain:
For neither chief was destin'd yet to bleed;
But fate at last the victory decreed.
The Salaminian hero aim'd a stroke,
Which thund'ring on the Thracian helmet broke;
Stun'd by the boist'rous shock, the warrior reel'd
With giddy poise, then sunk upon the field.
Their leader to defend, his native train
With speed advance, and guard him on the plain.
Against his foe, their threat'ning launces rise,
And aim'd at once, a storm of arrows flies;

Around

Around the chief on ev'ry side they sing;
One in his shoulder fix'd its barbed sting.
Amaz'd he stood, nor could the fight renew;
But slow and sullen from the foe withdrew.
Straight to the charge Idomeneus proceeds,
With hardy Merion try'd in martial deeds,
Laertes' valiant son, and he who led
The youth in Sycion, and Pellene, bred;
With force united, these the foe sustain,
And wasteful havoc loads the purple plain:
In doubtful poise the scales of combat sway'd,
And various fates alternately obey'd.

BUT now the flames, which barr'd th'invading foe,
Sunk to the wasted wood, in ashes glow;
Thebes rushes to the fight; their polish'd shields
Gleam thro' the smoke, and brighten all the fields;
Thick fly the embers, where the coursers tread,
And cloudy volumes all the welkin shade.
The king of men, to meet the tempest, fires
His wav'ring bands, and valor thus inspires.
Gods! shall one fatal hour deface the praise
Of all our sleepless nights, and bloody days?
Shall no just meed for all our toils remain?
Our labors, blood, and victories in vain?
Shall Creon triumph, and his impious brow
Claim the fair wreath, to truth and valor due?
No, warriors! by the heav'nly pow'rs, is weigh'd
Justice with wrong, in equal balance laid:

From

From Jove's high roof depend th' eternal scales,
Wrong mounts defeated still, and right prevails.
Fear then no odds; on heav'n itself depend,
Which falshood will confound, and truth defend.

He said; and sudden in the shock they close,
Their shields and helmets ring with mutual blows:
Disorder dire the mingling ranks confounds,
And shouts of triumph mix with dying sounds;
As fire, with wasteful conflagration, spreads,
And kindles, in its course, the woodland shades,
When, shooting sudden from the clouds above,
On some thick forest fall the flames of Jove;
The lofty oaks, the pines and cedars burn,
Their verdant honors all to ashes turn;
Loud roars the tempest; and the trembling swains:
See the wide havoc of the wasted plains:
Such seem'd the conflict; such the dire alarms,
From shouts of battle mix'd with din of arms.
Phericles first, Lycaon's valiant son,
The sage whose counsels prop'd the Theban throne,
Rose in the fight, superior to the rest,
And brave Democleon's fall his might confest;
The chief and leader of a valiant band,
From fair Eione and th' Asinian strand.
Next Asius, Iphitus, and Crates fell;
Terynthian Podius trode the path to hell:
And Schedius, from Mazeta's fruitful plain,
Met there his fate, and perish'd with the slain.

Aw'd

Aw'd by their fall, the Argive bands give way;
 As yields some rampart to the ocean's sway;
 When rous'd to rage, it scorns opposing mounds,
 And sweeps victorious thro' forbidden grounds.

BUT Pallas, anxious for her fav'rite host,
 Their best already wounded, many lost,
 Ulysses sought: she found him, in the rear,
 Wounded and faint, and leaning on his spear,
 And thus in Mentor's form; Brave prince! I dread
 Our hopes defeated, and our fall decreed:
 For conqu'ring on the right the foe prevails,
 And all defence against their fury fails;
 While here, in doubtful poise, the battle sways,
 And various fates alternately obeys;
 If great Tydides, who beholds from far
 Our danger imminent, yet shuns the war,
 Held by resentment, or some cause unknown,
 Regardless of our safety and his own,
 Would rise to aid us; yet we might respire,
 And Creon, frustrated, again retire.
 Great were his praise, who could the chief persuade,
 In peril so extreme, the host to aid.
 The fittest you, who boast the happy skill,
 With pleasing words, to move the fixed will:
 Tho' Nestor justly merits equal fame,
 A friend the soonest will a friend reclaim.

AND thus Ulysses to the martial maid:
 I cannot hope the hero to persuade:

The

The source unknown from which his rage proceeds,
Reason in vain from loose conjecture pleads;
The fatal truce, with faithless Creon made,
Provokes him not, nor holds him from our aid;
He easily resign'd whate'er he mov'd,
Till now, approving as the rest approv'd,
Some dire disaster, some disgrace unseen,
Confounds his steady temper, else serene:
But with my utmost search, I'll strive to find
The secret griefs which wound his gen'rous mind;
If drain'd of blood, and spent with toils of war,
My weary limbs can bear their load so far.

He spoke; his words the martial maid admir'd;
With energy divine his breast inspir'd;
Lightly the hero mov'd, and took his way
Where broad encamp'd th' Etolian warriors lay:
Already arm'd he found the daring band,
Fierce and impatient of their lord's command;
Some, murmur'ing, round the king's pavilion stood,
While others, more remote, complain'd aloud:
With pleasing words he sooth'd them as he went,
And sought their valiant leader in his tent:
Him pond'ring deep in his distracted mind,
He found, and sitting sad, with head declin'd.
He thus address'd him: Will the news, I bring,
Afflict, or gratify, th' Etolian king?
"That wav'ring on the brink of foul defeat,
Without the hopes of success or retreat,
Our

Our valiant bands th' unequal fight maintain;
 Their best already wounded, many slain."
 If treach'rous Thebes has brib'd you with her store,
 And bought the venal faith which once you swore;
 Has promis'd precious ore, or lovely dames,
 And pays to lust the price which treason claims:
 Name but the proffers of the perjur'd king,
 And more, and better, from your friends I'll bring;
 Vast sums of precious ore, and greater far
 Than Thebes, in peace, had treasur'd for the war;
 Or, tho', to gratify thy boundless mind,
 Her private wealth and public were combin'd.
 If beauty's pow'r your am'rous heart inflames,
 Unrival'd are Achaia's lovely dames;
 Her fairest dames Adrastus shall bestow,
 And purchase thus the aid you freely owe.
 Gods! that our armies e'er should need to fear
 Destruction, and the son of Tydeus near!

ULYSSES thus; and Tydeus' son again:
 Your false reproaches aggravate my pain
 Too great already: in my heart I feel
 Its venom'd sting, more sharp than pointed steel.
 No bribe persuades, or promise from the foe,
 My oath to violate, and the war forgoe:
 In vain for this were all the precious store,
 Which trading Zidon wafts from shore to shore;
 With all that rich Iberia yet contains,
 Safe and unrifled in her golden veins:

The

The source from which my miseries arise,
The cause, which to the host my aid denies,
With truth I shall relate; and hope to claim
Your friendly sympathy, for groundless blame.
In yonder walls a captive maid remains,
To me more dear than all the world contains;
Fairer she is than nymph was ever fair;
Pallas in stature and majestic air;
As Venus soft, with Cynthia's sprightly grace,
When on Taïgetus she leads the chace,
Or Erymanthus; while in fix'd amaze,
At awful distance held, the satyrs gaze.
With oaths divine our plighted faith we bound;
Hymen had soon our mutual wishes crown'd;
When, call'd to arms, against the Theban tow'rs,
From Calydon I led my martial pow'rs.
Her female form in martial arms conceal'd,
With me she brav'd the terrors of the field:
Unknown and unrewarded, from my side
No toil could drive her, and no shock divide.
But now proud Thebes injuriously detains
The lovely virgin, lock'd in hostile chains;
Doom'd, and reserv'd to perish, for my sake,
If of your counsels, I, or works, partake;
Till twenty mornings in the east shall rise,
And twenty ev'nings gild the western skies.
See then the cause which holds me, and confines
My arm, to aid you, tho' my heart inclines;
Love mix'd with pity, whose restraints I feel
Than adamant more strong, and links of steel.

THE

THE hero thus. Laertes' son reply'd:
 Oft have I heard what now is verify'd;
 That still when passion reigns without control,
 Its sway confounds and darkens all the soul.
 If Thebes, by perjury, the gods provok'd,
 The vengeance slighted, by themselves invok'd;
 Assaulted us, secure, with hostile arms,
 And mix'd our pious rites with dire alarms:
 With better faith, by faithless Creon sway'd,
 Will they at last restore the captive maid?
 When from their battlements and lofty spires,
 They see their champaign shine with hostile fires:
 And, pitch'd around them, hosts of armed foes,
 With strict embrace, their straiten'd walls inclose;
 The gods they scorn as impotent, and vain:
 What will they do, when you alone remain?
 Our princes fall'n, the vulgar warriors fled,
 Shall to your tent the captive fair be led?
 Or rather must you see her matchless charms
 Reserv'd to bless some happier rival's arms;
 While rage and jealousy divide your breast,
 No present friend to pity or assist?
 Now rather rise; and, ere it is too late,
 Rescue our armies from impending fate.
 The captive maid uninjur'd you'll regain;
 Force oft obtains what justice asks in vain.
 With success thus your wishes shall be crown'd,
 Which trust in Thebes would frustrate and confound.

ULYSSES

ULYSSES thus: his weighty words inclin'd,
Long tortur'd with suspense, the hero's mind;
As settling winds the moving deep control,
And teach the wav'ring billows how to roll:
Straight from his seat th' Etolian warrior rose;
His mighty limbs the martial greaves inclose;
His breast and thighs in polish'd steel he dress'd;
A plumed helmet next his temples press'd:
From the broad baldric, round his shoulders flung,
His shining sword and starry faulcion hung:
The spear he last assum'd, and pond'rous shield,
With martial grace, and issu'd to the field:
To mingle in the fight, with eager haste
He rush'd, nor call'd his warriors as he past.
Ulysses these conven'd; his prudent care
Their ranks dispos'd, and led them to the war.
Afar distinguish'd by his armor bright,
With shouts Tydides rous'd the ling'ring fight;
Thro' all the host his martial voice resounds,
And ev'ry heart with kindling ardor bounds;
As when the sun ascends, with glad some ray,
To light the weary trav'ler on his way;
Or cheer the mariner by tempests tost
Amidst the dangers of some per'lous coast:
So to his wishing friends Tydides came;
Their danger such before, their joy the same.

PHERICLES saw; and, springing from the throng,
Call'd the bold Thebans, as he rush'd along:

Ye

Ye gen'rous youths! whom fair Boeotia breeds,
 The nurse of valor and heroic deeds;
 Let not, tho' oft renew'd, these tedious toils
 Your martial ardor quench, and damp your souls.
 Tydides comes; and leads, in armor bright,
 His native bands, impatient for the fight;
 Myself the first the hero's arm shall try,
 And teach you how to conquer, or to die.
 We strive not now, as when, in days of peace,
 Some prince's hymeneal rites to grace,
 In list'd fields bedew'd with fragrant oil,
 In combat feign'd, the mimic warriors toil;
 Alike the victors, and the vanquish'd fare,
 And genial feasts, to both, conclude the war:
 We now must conquer; or it stands decreed
 That Thebes shall perish, and her people bleed.
 No hopes of peace remain; nor can we find
 New gods to witness, or new oaths to bind,
 The first infring'd: and therefore must prepare
 To stand or perish by the lot of war:
 Then let us all undaunted brave our fate:
 To stop is doubtful, desp'rate to retreat.

THE hero thus; and to the battle led;
 Like Mars, he seem'd, in radiant armor clad,
 Tow'ring sublime; behind his ample shield,
 He mov'd to meet Tydides on the field:
 As when at noon, descending to the rills,
 Two herds encounter, from the neighb'ring hills;

Before

Before the rest, the rival bulls prepare,
 With awful prelude, for th' approaching war;
 With desprate horns they plough the smoaking
 ground;

Their hideous roar the hollow caves resound;
 Heav'd o'er their backs the streaming sand ascends;
 Their stern encounter both the herds suspends:
 So met the chiefs; and such amazement quell'd
 The rest, and in suspence the combat held.

Tydides first his weighty weapon threw,
 Wide of the mark with erring force it flew.
 Phericles! thine succeeds with happier aim,
 Full to the center of the shield it came:
 But slightly join'd, unequal to the stroke,
 Short from the steel, the staff in splinters broke.

With grief Tydides saw his aim deceiv'd;
 From off the field a pond'rous rock he heav'd;
 With figures rude of antique sculpture grac'd,
 It mark'd the reliques of a man deceas'd.
 Push'd at his foe the weighty mass he flung;
 Thund'ring it fell; the Theban helmet rung:
 Deep with the brain the dinted steel it mix'd,
 And lifeless, on the ground, the warrior fix'd.

Aw'd by his fall, the Theban bands retire;
 As flocks defenceless shun a lion's ire;
 At once they yield, unable to withstand
 The wide destruction of Tydides' hand.
 Disorder soon, the form of war confounds,
 And shouts of triumph mix with dying sounds.

Creon

Creon perceiv'd, where ruling on the right
In equal poise he held the scales of fight,
Blaspheming heav'n, he impiously resign'd,
To stern despair, his unsubmitting mind :
Yet, vers'd in all the various turns of fate,
The brisk assault to rule, or safe retreat,
He drew his firm battalions from the foe,
In martial order, regularly slow.
The Argive leaders, thund'ring in the rear,
Still forwards on the yielding squadrons bear :
The strife with unabated fury burns,
They stop, they combat, and retreat by turns ;
As the grim lion surlily leaves the plains,
By dogs compell'd, and bands of armed swains ;
Indignant to his woody haunts he goes,
And with retorted glare restrains his foes.

MEAN while Tydides, near the Cadmean gate,
Urg'd with incessant toil the work of fate ;
Towards the walls, an undistinguish'd throng,
The victors and the vanquish'd, rush'd along.
Access to both the guarded wall denies ;
From ev'ry tow'r, a storm of jav'lins flies ;
Thick as the hail descends, when Boreas flings
The rattling tempest from his airy wings :
So thick the jav'lins fell, and pointed spears ;
Behind them close, another host appears,
In order'd columns rang'd, by Creon led :
Ulysses saw ; and thus to Diomed :

Bold

Bold as you are, avoid these guarded tow'rs,
From loose pursuit recal your scatter'd pow'rs:
See Creon comes; his thick embattled train,
In phalanx join'd, approaches from the plain.
Here if we stay th' unequal fight to prove,
The tow'rs and ramparts threaten from above
With darts and stones; while to th' invading foe,
In order loose, our scatter'd ranks we show;
Nor by your matchless valor hope, in vain,
Such odds to conquer, and the fight maintain;
Against an army single force must lose;
Immod'rate courage still like folly shows.
See where into the field yon turret calls,
Drawn to a point the long-extended walls:
There force your way, and speedily regain
The space, and safety of the open plain.

ULYSSES thus; and, by his prudence sway'd,
The martial son of Tydeus straight obey'd.
Thrice to the height the hero rais'd his voice,
Loud as the silver trumpet's martial noise,
The signal of retreat; his warriors heard,
And round their chief in order'd ranks appear'd,
Drawn from the mingled tumult of the plain;
As, sever'd on the floor, the golden grain
Swells to a heap; while, whirling thro' the skies,
The dusty chaff in thick disorder flies;
Tydides leads; between the guarded tow'rs
And hostile ranks, he draws his martial pow'rs

I

Towards

Towards the plain ; as mariners, with oar
And sail, avoid some promontory's shore ;
When, caught between the ocean and the land,
A sudden tempest bears them on the strand ;
The stem opposing to its boist'rous sway,
They shun the cape and stretch into the bay :
So scap'd Tydides. Cover'd by their tow'rs,
In safety stood retir'd the Theban pow'rs,
For from above an iron tempest rain'd,
And the incursions of the foe restrain'd.

THE

THE

EPIGONIAD.

BOOK IX.

AND now the king of men his army calls
Back from the danger of th' impending walls;
They quit the combat, and in order long
The field possess, a phalanx deep and strong.
Rank following rank, the Theban squadrons move
Still to the rampart, and the tow'rs above:
Creon himself, unwilling, quits the field,
Enrag'd, defeated, and constrain'd to yield:
Gainst all his foes, his indignation burns,
But first on Diomed its fury turns.
He call'd a vulgar warrior from the crowd,
A villain dark, and try'd in works of blood,
Erembus nam'd, of huge gigantic size,
With cloudy features mark'd, and down-cast eyes;
Cold and inactive still in combat found,
Nor wont to kindle at the trumpet's sound;
But bold in villainy when pow'r commands;
A weapon fitted for a tyrant's hands.

And thus the wrathful monarch: Take this sword,
A sign, to all my servants, from their lord;
And hither bring the fair Etolian's head;
I, who command you, will reward the deed:
But let not pity, or remorse, prevail;
Your own shall answer, if in aught you fail.

He said: the murth'rer, practis'd to obey,
The royal sword receiv'd, and took his way
Straight to the palace, where the captive fair,
Of hope bereft, and yielding to despair,
Lamenting sat. Their mutual griefs to blend,
The queen and all the royal maids attend.
And thus the queen: Fair stranger! shall your grief
All hopes reject of comfort and relief?
Your woes I've measur'd, all your sorrows known;
And find them light when balanc'd with my own.
In one sad day my valiant sire I mourn'd;
My brothers slain; my native walls o'erturn'd;
Myself a captive, destin'd to fulfill,
In servile drudgery, a master's will;
Yet to a fall so low, the gods decreed
This envy'd height of greatness to succeed.
The pow'rs above, for purposes unknown,
Oft-raise the fall'n, and bring the lofty down;
Elude the vigilance of all our care:
Our surest hopes deceive, and mock despair.
Let no desponding thoughts your mind possess,
To banish hope, the medicine of distress;

For

For nine short days your freedom will restore,
 And break the bondage which you thus deplore.
 But I, alas! unhappy still, must mourn
 Joys once possess'd, which never can return;
 Four valiant sons, who perish'd on the plain
 In this dire strife, a fifth on Oeta slain:
 These shall return to bless my eyes no more;
 The grave's dark mansion knows not to restore,
 For time, which bids so oft the solar ray
 Repeat, with light renew'd, th' ethereal way,
 And from the soil, by heat and vernal winds,
 To second life the latent plant unbinds,
 Again to flourish, nurs'd by wholesome dews,
 Never to mortal man his life renews.
 These griefs are sure; but others still I fear;
 A royal husband lost, and bondage near;
 Myself, my daughters, dragg'd by hostile hands;
 Our dignity exchang'd for servile bands:
 All this the gods may purpose, and fulfill;
 And we with patience must endure their will.

As thus Laodice her sorrow try'd
 With sympathy to sooth; the maid reply'd:
 Great queen! on whom the sov'reign pow'rs bestow
 A gen'rous heart to feel another's woe;
 Let still untouch'd thro' life your honors last,
 With happier days to come for sorrows past!
 Yet strive not thus a hopeless wretch to cheer,
 Whom sure conjecture leads the worst to fear.

Shall Diomed a public cause forgoe,
His faithful friends betray, and trust a foe?
By treachery behold the host o'erthrown,
Renounce the public interest and his own?
Shall kings and armies, in the balance laid,
Avail not to out-weigh a single maid?
One, whom his fury falsely did reprove
For crimes unknown, whose only crime was love:
No, sure ere this he triumphs in the field;
Your armies to his matchless valor yield:
And soon submitting to the fatal blow,
This head must gratify a vanquish'd foe.
If symbols e'er the secret fates explain,
If visions do not always warn in vain,
If dreams do ever true prognostics prove,
And dreams, the fates say, descend from Jove,
My fate approaches: Late at dead of night;
My veins yet freeze with horror and affright!
I thought that, all forsaken and alone,
Pensive I wander'd far thro' ways unknown;
A gloomy twilight, neither night nor day
Frown'd on my steps, and sadden'd all the way:
Long dreary vales I saw on ev'ry side,
And caverns sinking deep, with entrance wide;
On ragged cliffs the blasted forests hung;
Her baleful note the boding screech-owl sung.
At last, with many a weary step, I found
This melancholy country's outmost bound,
An ocean vast: upon a cliff I stood,
And saw, beneath me far, the sable flood;

No

No islands rose the dull expanse to grace,
And nought was seen, thro' all the boundless space,
But low-brow'd clouds, which on the billows frown'd,
And, in a night of shade, the prospect drown'd.
The winds, which seem'd around the cliffs to blow,
With doleful cadence, utter'd sounds of woe,
Wafting, from ev'ry cave and dreary den,
The wail of infants mix'd with groans of men:
Amaz'd, on ev'ry side my eyes I turn,
And see depending from the craggy bourn
Wretches unnumber'd; some the mould'ring soil,
Some grasp'd the slipp'ry rock, with fruitless toil;
Some hung suspended by the roots, which pass
Thro' crannies of the cliffs, or wither'd grass,
Still from the steep they plung'd into the main;
As from the eves descends the trickling rain.
Amaz'd I turn'd, and strove in vain to fly;
Thickets oppos'd, and precipices high
To stop my sight: and, from the airy steep,
A tempest snatch'd, and hurl'd me to the deep.
The sudden violence my slumber broke;
The waves I seem'd to touch, and straight awoke.
With sleep the vision fled; but, in my mind,
Imprinted deep, its image left behind.
For had the frightful scene which fancy drew,
And what I seem'd to suffer, all been true;
Had fate appear'd, in blackest colors dress'd,
No deeper had its horrors been impress'd.
When thus the gods by certain symbols warn,
And sure, from dreams, their purposes we learn,

No blame I merit, that to fear resign'd,
Fate's dread approach sits heavy on my mind;

CASSANDRA thus; Laodice again:
Futurity, in dreams, we seek in vain;
For oft, from thoughts disturb'd, such phantoms rise,
As fogs from marshes climb, to blot the skies;
With a dark veil, the chearful face of day
They sadden, and eclipse the solar ray;
But soon, in dews and soft descending rains,
Fall to refresh the mountains and the plains.
For Diomed's offence you ne'er can bleed;
Favor, your sex and innocence will plead,
Ev'n with the worst; nor will a generous foe
His rage, in cruelty and baseness, show.
Now to the tow'rs I haste, to view from far
The danger, or success of this day's war.
Let Clymene with me the walls ascend;
The rest at home domestic cares attend.

SHE ended thus; and from her seat arose;
The royal maid attends her, as she goes
Towards the western gate; where full to view
Expos'd, the armies and the camp she knew.
And now appear'd within the lofty gate,
By Creon sent, the messenger of fate.
His shining blade, for execution bar'd,
And aspect dark, his purpose straight declar'd.
Alarm'd, at once the royal virgins rise,
And scatt'ring, fill the dome with female cries;

But,

But, bolder from despair, Cassandra staid,
And to th' assassin thus, undaunted, said:
Approach! divide this neck with deathful steel,
A tyrant's vassal no remorse should feel.
O Diomed! let this example prove,
In man, that stubborn honor conquers love:
With weight superior, great ambition draws
The scale for glory, and a public cause.
I blame thee not for this; nor will impeach
A great example, which I could not reach:
For had whole armies, in the balance laid,
And kings and mighty states with thee been weigh'd,
And I the judge appointed to decree,
They all had perished to ransom thee.
Cassandra thus; and for the blow prepar'd,
With both her hands, her shining neck she bar'd,
And round her head a purple garment roll'd,
With leaves of silver mark'd, and flow'rs of gold.
Rais'd for the stroke, the glitt'ring faulcion hung,
And swift descending, bore the head along.
A tide of gore, diffus'd in purple streams,
Dashes the wall, and o'er the pavement swims,
Prone to the ground the headless trunk reclines,
And life, in long convulsive throbs, resigns.

Now on the open plain before the walls,
The king of men the chiefs to council calls.
And Diomed, with secret griefs oppress'd,
Impatient, thus the public ear address'd:

Confed'rate kings! and thou, whose sov'reign hand
 Sways the dread scepter of supreme command!
 What holds us, and restrains our martial pow'rs;
 While haughty Thebes insults us, from her tow'rs?
 In vain we conquer thus, and bleed in vain,
 If victory but yields the empty plain.
 Behind his walls, perfidious Creon lies,
 And safely meditates a new surprize:
 When on the urn our pious tears we pour;
 Or mirth disarms us, and the genial hour;
 No; let us rather, now when fortune calls,
 With bold assault, attempt to mount the walls;
 Myself the first a chosen band shall lead,
 Where yon low rampart sinks into the mead:
 There will I gain the battlements, and lay,
 For others to succeed, an open way,
 If bars of steel have force their works to tear,
 Or, from their hinges heav'd the gates, can bear.

TYDIDES thus. His counsel to oppose,
 The leader of the Cretan warriors rose:
 Confed'rate kings! and thou, whose sov'reign hand
 Sways the dread scepter of supreme command!
 Let not Tydides now, with martial rage,
 In measures hot and rash, the host engage;
 To sober reason, still let passion yield,
 Nor here, admit the ardor of the field:
 If Thebes could thus with one assault be won,
 Her armies vanquish'd, and her walls o'erthrown;

Could

Could this one signal day reward our toil,
So long endur'd, with victory and spoil :
No soldier in the ranks, no leader here,
Would shun the fight, or counsel to forbear.
But if for victory, a foul defeat,
With all the shame and danger of retreat,
Should be the issue, which the wise must dread,
To stop is better, sure, than to proceed.
On yonder walls and lofty turrets, stand,
Not, sav'd from shameful flight, a heartless band,
Who, desp'rate of their state, would soon forego
Their last defences, and admit a foe ;
But who, from fight recall'd, without dismay,
A safe retreat maintain'd, in firm array.
Secure they combat from protecting walls ;
Thrown from above each weapon heavier falls ;
Against such odds, can we the fight maintain,
And with a foe found equal on the plain ?
Though we desist, no leader will oppose
That thus the fruits of victory we lose ;
When, pent within their battlements and tow'rs,
In narrow space, we hold the Theban pow'rs :
For oftner, than by arms, are hosts o'erthrown
By dearth and sickness, in a straiten'd town.
He who can only wield the sword and spear,
Knows less than half the instruments of war.
Heart-gnawing hunger, enemy to life,
Wide-wasting pestilence, and civil strife,

By want inflam'd, to all our weapons claim
 Superior force, and strike with surer aim:
 With these, whoever arm'd to combat goes,
 Instructed how to turn them on his foes,
 Shall see them soon laid prostrate on the ground,
 His aims accomplish'd, and his wishes crown'd.
 Our warriors, therefore, let us straight recall,
 Nor, by assault, attempt to force the wall;
 But with a rampart, to the gates oppos'd,
 Besiege, in narrow space, our foes inclos'd.

THE hero thus; and, eager to reply,
 Tydides rose: when on a turret high
 Creon appear'd; Cassandra's head, display'd
 Upon a lance's point, he held, and said:
 Ye Argive warriors! view this sign; and know,
 That Creon never fails to quit a foe.
 This bloody trophy mark; and if it brings
 Grief and despair to any of the kings,
 Let him revenge it on the man who broke
 His faith, and dar'd my fury to provoke.

He ended thus. Tydides, as he heard,
 With rage distracted, and despair, appear'd.
 Long on the tow'r he fix'd his burning eyes;
 The rest were mute with wonder and surprize;
 But, to the council turning, thus at last:
 If any favor claim my merits past;

If,

If, by a present benefit, ye'd bind
 To future services a grateful mind;
 Let what I urge, in council, now prevail,
 With hostile arms yon rampart to assail:
 Else, with my native bands, alone I'll try
 The combat, fix'd to conquer or to die.

THE hero thus. Ulysses thus express
 The prudent dictates of his generous breast:
 Princes! shall dire contention still preside
 In all our councils, and the kings divide?
 Sure, of the various ills that can distress
 United armies and prevent success,
 Discord is chief: where'er the fury strays,
 The parts she severs and the whole betrays:
 Now let Tydides lead his native powers
 To combat, and assault the Theban towers;
 The rest, on various parts, their forces show,
 By mock approaches to distract the foe.
 If he prevails, to victory he leads;
 And safe behind him all the host succeeds:
 If Jove forbids and all decreeing fate,
 The field is open, and a safe retreat.

ULYSSES thus. The princes all assent;
 Straight from the council thro' the host they went,
 Review'd its order, and in front dispos'd
 The slingers, and the rear with bowmen clos'd;

Arming

Arming the rest with all that could avail,
The tow'rs and battlements to sap or scale.
Tydides first his martial squadrons leads;
Ulysses, with his native band, succeeds.
Upon them, as they came, the Thebans pour
A storm of jav'lins, shot from ev'ry tow'r;
As from the naked heights the feather'd kind,
By bitter show'rs compell'd, and wintry wind,
In clouds assembled, from some mountain's head,
To shelter crowd, and dive into the shade;
Such and so thick the winged weapons flew,
And many warriors wounded, many flew.
Now on their ranks, by forceful engines thrown,
Springs, from the twisted rope, the pond'rous stone,
With wide destruction thro' the host to roll,
To mix its order and confound the whole.

INTREPID still th' Etolian chief proceeds;
And still Ulysses follows as he leads.
They reach'd the wall. Tydides, with a bound,
Twice strove in vain to mount it from the ground.
Twice fled the foe; as, to the boist'rous sway
Of some proud billow, mariners give way;
Which, rous'd by tempests, 'gainst a vessel bends
Its force, and mounting o'er the deck ascends:
Again he rose: the third attempt prevail'd;
But, crumbling in his grasp, the rampart fail'd:

For

For thunder there its fury had imprest,
And loos'd a shatter'd fragment from the rest.
Supine upon the earth the hero falls,
Mix'd with the smoke and ruin of the walls.
By disappointment chaf'd, and fierce from pain,
Unable now the rampart to regain,
He turn'd, and saw his native bands afar,
By fear restrain'd, and ling'ring in the war.
From Creon straight and Thebes, his anger turns,
And 'gainst his friends, with equal fury, burns;
As when, from snows dissolv'd or sudden rains,
A torrent swells and roars along the plains;
If, rising to oppose its angry tide,
In full career, it meets a mountain's side;
In foaming eddies, backwards to its source,
It wheels, and rages with inverted course:
So turn'd at once, the fury, in his breast,
Against Ulysses, thus itself exprest:
Author accurs'd, and source of all my woes!
Friend more pernicious than the worst of foes!
By thy suggestions from my purpose sway'd,
I slew Cassandra, and myself betray'd;
Hence, lodg'd within this tortur'd breast, remains
A fury, to inflict eternal pains.
I need not follow, with vindictive spear,
A traitor absent, while a worse is near:
Creon but acted what you well foreknew,
When me unwilling to the fight you drew.

To you the first my vengeance shall proceed,
And then on Creon and myself succeed:
Such sacrifice Cassandra's ghost demands,
And such I'll offer with determin'd hands.

Thus as he spoke, Ulysses pond'ring stood,
Whether by art to sooth his furious mood,
Or, with a sudden hand, his lance to throw,
Preventing, ere it fell, the threaten'd blow.
But, gliding from above, the martial maid
Between them stood, in majesty display'd;
Her radiant eyes with indignation burn'd,
On Diomed their piercing light she turn'd;
And frowning thus: Thy frantic rage restrain;
Else by dread Styx I swear, nor swear in vain,
That proof shall teach you whether mortal might
This arm invincible can match in fight.
Is't not enough that he, whose hoary hairs
Still watch'd your welfare with a father's cares,
Who dar'd, with zeal and courage, to withstand
Your fatal phrenzy, perish'd by your hand?
That, slighting ev'ry tie which princes know,
You leagu'd in secret with a public foe?
And, from your faith by fond affection sway'd,
The kings, the army, and yourself betray'd?
Yet, still unaw'd, from such atrocious deeds,
To more and worse your desp'rate rage proceeds.

And

And dooms to perish, by a mad decree,
The chief who sav'd alike the host and thee.
Had Thebes prevail'd, and one decisive hour
The victory had fix'd beyond thy pow'r;
These limbs, ere now had captive fetters worn,
To infamy condemn'd, and hostile scorn;
While fair Cassandra, with her virgin charms,
A prize decreed, had blest some rival's arms.
Did not the worth of mighty Tydeus plead,
Approv'd when living, and rever'd when dead,
For favor to his guilty son, and stand
A rampart to oppose my vengeful hand;
You soon had found how mad it is to wage
War with the gods, and tempt immortal rage.
This Thebes shall know, ere to the ocean's streams
The sun again withdraws his setting beams;
For now the gods consent, in vengeance just,
For all her crimes, to mix her with the dust.
The Goddess thus; and turning to the field,
Her deity in Mentor's form conceal'd:
With courage new each warrior's heart inspires,
And wakes again, in all, their martial fires.

CONSCIOUS of wrong, and speechless from surprize,
Tydides stood, nor dar'd to lift his eyes,
Of fate regardless; tho' from ev'ry tow'r,
Stones, darts, and arrows fell, a mingled show'r:
For awe divine subdu'd him, and the shame
Which virtue suffers from the touch of blame.

But

But to Ulysses turning, thus at last :
Prince ! can thy gen'rous love forget the past ;
And all remembrance banish from thy mind,
Of what my fury and despair design'd ?
If you forgive me, straight our pow'rs recall
Who shun the fight, while I attempt the wall.
Some present god inspires me ; for I feel
My heart exulting knock the plated steel :
In brisker rounds the vital spirit flies,
And ev'ry limb with double force supplies.

TYDIDES thus. Ulysses thus again :
Shall heav'n forgive offences, man retain ;
Tho' born to err, by jarring passions tost ?
The best, in good, no steadiness can boast :
No malice therefore in my heart shall live ;
To sin is human ; human to forgive.
But do not now your single force oppose
To lofty ramparts, and an host of foes ;
Let me at least, attending at your side,
Partake the danger, and the toil divide :
For see our pow'rs advancing to the storm !
Pallas excites them in a mortal form.
Let us, to mount the rampart, straight proceed ;
They of themselves will follow as we lead.

ULYSSES thus ; and, springing from the ground,
Both chiefs at once ascend the lofty mound.

Before

Before him each his shining buckler bears
'Gainst flying darts, and thick portended spears.
Now, on the bulwark's level top, they stand,
And charge on ev'ry side the hostile band:
There many warriors in close fight they slew,
And many headlong from the rampart threw.
Pallas her fav'rite champions still inspires,
Their nerves confirms, and wakes their martial fires,
With course divided, on the foe they fall,
And bare between them leave a length of wall;
As fire, when kindled on some mountain's head,
Where runs, in long extent, the woodland shade,
Consumes the middle forest, and extends
Its parted progress to the distant ends:
So fought the leaders, while their scatter'd pow'rs,
In phalanx join'd, approach'd the Theban tow'rs;
With hands, and heads against the rampart lean'd,
The first, upon their shields, the rest sustain'd:
Rank above rank the living structure grows,
As settling bees the pendent heap compose,
Which to some cavern's roof united clings,
Woven thick with complicated feet and wings:
Thus mutually sustain'd, the warriors bend;
While o'er their heads the order'd ranks ascend.

And now the martial goddess with delight,
Plac'd on a turret's top, survey'd the fight.

Thrice

Thrice to the height she rais'd her awful voice;
 The tow'rs and bulwarks trembled at the noise:
 Both warring hosts alike the signal hear;
 To this, the cause of hope, to that, of fear.
 And Theseus thus address'd his martial train:
 Here shall we wage a distant war in vain,
 When now Tydides, from the conquer'd tow'rs
 Descending, on the town his warriors pours?
 Your glory if ye would assert, nor yield
 At once the praise of many a well-fought field;
 Ascend these lofty battlements, and claim
 With those who conquer now an equal fame.
 The monarch thus; and to the combat leads;
 With emulation fir'd, the host proceeds;
 Under a show'r of falling darts they go,
 Climb the steep ramparts, and assault the foe;
 As winds outrageous, from the ocean wide,
 Against some mole impel the stormy tide,
 Whose rocky arms, oppos'd to the deep,
 From tempests, safe the anchoring vessel keep;
 Wave heap'd on wave, the stormy deluge tow'rs,
 And o'er it, with resistless fury, pours:
 Such seem'd the fight, the Theban host o'erthrown,
 The wall deserts, and mingles with the town.

CREON in vain the desp'rate rout withstands,
 With sharp reproaches and vindictive hands;

His

His rage they shun not, nor his threat'nings hear,
From stunning clamors deaf, and blind from fear.
And thus the monarch with uplifted eyes,
And both his hands extended to the skies:
Ye Pow'rs supreme, whose unresisted sway
The fates of men and mortal things obey!
Against your counsels, vain it is to strive,
Which only ruin nations or retrieve.
Here in your sight, with patience, I resign
That envy'd royalty which once was mine;
Renounce the cares, that wait upon a crown,
And make my last attention all my own.
Seven virgin daughters in my house remain,
Who must not live to swell a victor's train;
Nor shall my wretched queen, in triumph borne,
Be lifted to the eye of public scorn:
One common fate our miseries shall end,
And, with the dust of Thebes, our ashes blend.

His fix'd decree the monarch thus express;
One half the fates confirm'd, deny'd the rest:
For now surrounded by the hostile crowd
His captive queen, an humble suppliant, stood.
Tydides found her as she left the walls;
Before the hero to the ground she falls;
With trembling hands, his mighty knees she press'd,
And, supplicating, thus with tears address'd:

Illustrious

Illustrious chief! for sure your gallant mien
 No less proclaims you, spare a wretched queen;
 One whom the gods with endless hate pursue,
 To griefs already sumless adding new;
 O spare a helpless wretch, who humbly bends,
 And for protection on thy might depends!
 As supplicating thus her suit she press'd,
 Ulysses heard, and thus the chief address'd:
 See how th'immortals, by a just decree,
 Cassandra's fall avenge, and honor thee!
 See, at thy feet, the wife of Creon laid,
 A victim offer'd for the injur'd maid.
 Let her the first your just resentment feel;
 By heav'n presented to your vengeful steel.

ULYSSES thus. With sighs the hero said:
 Enough is offer'd to Cassandra's shade;
 With wide destruction, wasting sword and fire,
 To plague the authors of her fall, conspire.
 Yet all in vain. No sacrifice recalls
 The parted ghost from Pluto's gloomy walls.
 Too long, alas! has lawless fury rul'd,
 To reason deaf, by no reflection cool'd:
 While I unhappy, by its dictates sway'd,
 My guardian murder'd, and the host betray'd.
 No victim, therefore, to my rage I'll pay;
 Nor ever follow as it points the way.

THE son of Tydeus thus; and to his tent,
From insults safe, the royal matron sent.
Himself again the course of conquest led
Till Thebes was overthrown, and Creon bled.

THE END.

7-11-61 G. L. MODINE and others

Q U E R Y

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D R E A M.

IN THE

Manner of SPENSER.

D R E A M.

IN THE

Manner of SPENSER.

A

D R E A M.

In the Manner of SPENSER.

I.

ONE ev'ning as by pleasant Forth I stray'd,
 In pensive mood, and meditated still
 On poets learned toil, with scorn repaid
 By Envy's bitter spite, and want of skill;
 A cave I found, which open'd in a hill.
 The floor was sand, with various shells yblended,
 Through which, in flow meanders, crept a rill;
 The roof, by Nature's cunning flight suspended:
 Thither my steps I turn'd, and there my journey ended.

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II.

Upon the ground my listless limbs I laid,
 Lull'd by the murmur of the passing stream:
 Then sleep, soft stealing, did my eyes invade;
 And waking thought, soon ended in a dream.
 Transported to a region I did seem,
 Which with Theſſalian Tempe might compare;
 Of verdant ſhade compos'd, and wat'ry gleam:
 Not even Valdarno, thought ſo paſſing fair,
 Might match this pleaſant land, in all perfections rare.

III.

One, like a hoary palmer, near a brook,
 Under an arbor, ſeated did appear;
 A ſhepherd ſwain, attending, held a book,
 And ſeem'd to read therein that he mote hear.
 From curioſity I ſtepped near;
 But ere I reach'd the place where they did fit,
 The whiſp'ring breezes waſted to my ear
 The ſound of rhymes which I myſelf had writ:
 Rhymes much, alas, too mean, for ſuch a judge unfit.

IV.

IV.

For him he seem'd who sung Achilles' rage,
 In lofty numbers that shall never die,
 And wise Ulysses' tedious pilgrimage,
 So long the sport of sharp adversity:
 The praises of his merit, Fame on high,
 With her shrill trump, for ever loud doth sound;
 With him no bard, for excellence, can vie,
 Of all that late or ancient e'er were found;
 So much he doth surpass ev'n bards the most renown'd.

V.

The shepherd swain invited me to come
 Up to the arbor where they seated were;
 For Homer call'd me: much I fear'd the doom
 Which such a judge seem'd ready to declare.
 As I approach'd, with meikle dread and care,
 He thus address'd me: Sir, the cause explain.
 Why all your story here is told so bare?
 Few circumstances mix'd of various grain;
 Such, surely, much enrich and raise a poet's strain.

VI.

Certes, quoth I, the critics are the cause
Of this, and many other mischiefs more;
Who tie the Muses to such rigid laws,
That all their songs are frivolous and poor.
They cannot now, as oft they did before,
Ere pow'ful prejudice had clipt their wings,
Nature's domain with boundless flight explore,
And traffick freely in her precious things:
Each bard now fears the rod, and trembles while he
sings.

VII.

Though Shakespear, still disdaining narrow rules,
His bosom fill'd with Nature's sacred fire,
Broke all the cobweb limits fix'd by fools,
And left the world to blame him and admire.
Yet his reward few mortals would desire;
For, of his learned toil, the only meed
That ever I could find he did acquire,
Is that our dull, degenerate, age of lead,
Says that he wrote by chance, and that he scarce
could read.

VIII.

VIII.

I ween, quoth he, that poets are to blame
When they submit to critics tyranny :
For learned wights there is no greater shame,
Than blindly with their dictates to comply.
Who ever taught the eagle how to fly,
Whose wit did e'er his airy tract define,
When with free wing he claims his native sky,
Say, will he steer his course by rule and line?
Certes, he'd scorn the bounds that would his flight
confine.

IX.

Not that the Muses' art is void of rules :
Many there are, I wot, and stricter far,
Than those which pedants dictate from the schools;
Who wage with wit and taste eternal war :
For foggy ignorance their sight doth mar ;
Nor can their low conception ever reach
To what dame Nature, crown'd with many a star,
Explains to such as know her learned speech ;
But few can comprehend the lessons she doth teach.

X.

XIV

As many as the stars that gild the sky,
 As many as the flow'rs that paint the ground;
 In number like the insect tribes that fly,
 The various forms of beauty still are found;
 That with strict limits no man may them bound,
 And say that this, and this alone, is right:
 Experience soon such rashness would confound,
 And make its folly obvious as the light;
 For such presumption sure becomes not mortal wight.

XI.

Therefore each bard should freely entertain
 The hints which pleasing fancy gives at will;
 Nor curb her sallies with too strict a rein,
 Nature subjecting to her hand-maid Skill:
 And you yourself in this have done but ill;
 With many more, who have not comprehended
 That Genius, cramped, will rarely mount the hill,
 Whose forked summit with the clouds is blended:
 Therefore, when next you write, let this defect be
 mended.

XII.

A D R E A M.

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XII.

But, like a friend, who candidly reproves
 For faults and errors which he doth espy,
 Each vice he freely marks; yet always loves
 To mingle favor with severity.
 Certes, quoth he, I cannot well deny,
 That you in many things may hope to please:
 You force a barbarous northern tongue to ply,
 And bend it to your purposes with ease;
 The' rough as Albion's rocks, and hoarser than her
 seas.

XIII.

Nor are your tales, I wot, so loosely yok'd,
 As those which Colin Clout * did tell before;
 Nor with description crouded so, and choak'd,
 Which, thinly spread, will always please the more.
 Colin, I wot, was rich in Nature's store;
 More rich than you, had more than he could use:
 But mad Orlando † taught him had his lore;
 Whose flights, at random, oft missed his muse:
 To follow such a guide, few prudent men would chuse.

* Spenser.

† Ariosto, so called from his hero.

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XIV.

XIV.

Me you have follow'd: Nature was my guide;
 To this the merit of your verse is owing:
 And know for certain, let it check your pride,
 That all you boast of is of my bestowing.
 The flow'rs I see, thro' all your garden blowing,
 Are mine; most part, at least: I might demand,
 Might claim them, as a crop of my own sowing,
 And leave but few, thin scatter'd o'er the land:
 A claim so just, I wot, you could not well withstand.

XV.

Certes, quoth I, that justice were full hard,
 Which me alone would sentence to restore;
 When many a learned sage, and many a bard,
 Are equally your debtors, or much more.
 Let Tityrus † himself produce his store,
 Take what is thine, but little will remain:
 Little, I wot, and that indebted sore
 To Alcra's bard ‡, and Arethusa's swain §;
 And others too beside, who lent him many a strain.

† Virgil.

‡ Hesiod.

§ Theocritus.

A D R E A M.

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XVI.

Nor could the modern bards afford to pay,

Whose songs exalt the champions of the Cross;

Take from each hoard thy sterling gold away,

And little will remain but worthless dross.

Not bards alone could ill support the loss;

But sages too, whose theft suspicion shunn'd:

E'en that sly Greek †, who steals and hides so close,
Were half a bankrupt, if he should refund.

While these are all forborn, shall I alone be dunn'd.

XVII.

He smil'd; and from his wreath, which well could spare

Such boon, the wreath with which his locks were clad,

Pluck'd a few leaves to hide my temples bare;

The present I receiv'd with heart full glad.

Henceforth, quoth I, I never will be sad;

For now I shall obtain my share of fame:

Nor will licentious wit, or envy bad,

With bitter taunts, my verses dare to blame:

This garland shall protect them, and exalt my name.

† Plato, reckoned, by Longinus, one of the greatest imitators of Homer,

XVIII.

A D R E A M

XVIII.

But dreams are short; for as I thought to lay
 My limbs, at ease, upon the flow'ry ground,
 And drink, with greedy ear, what he might say,
 As murmur'ing waters sweet, or music's sound,
 My sleep departed; and I, waking, found
 Myself again by Forth's pleasant stream.
 Homewards I stepp'd, in meditation drown'd,
 Reflecting on the meaning of my dream;
 Which let each wight interpret as him best doth seem.

XIX.



E I N I S.